

**EIGHT CREWMEN AND ONE
UTILITY GIRL**

by Basil Wells



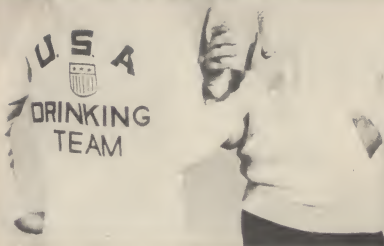
**ANDROID, KILL
FOR ME!**

by Kate Wilhelm

**THERE'S NO PLACE
LIKE SPACE!**

by Robert Silverberg





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illustrated
by
WOOD

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE SPACE

by Robert Silverberg

Ed Reese loved his space assignment on Crawford IX, and didn't want a vacation on Earth. But he had to take it, and Carol Dwyer was there to see that he had thirty-four weeks of sheer pleasure!

I GUESS the root of all my trouble was that I just didn't like cities. Crowds. Soot-cluttered air. Noise. Neon lights. Not that I'm a country boy, you understand; I was



The execs departed, leaving me with Carol Dwyer, who was supposed to start me off on my thirty-four weeks of uninterrupted pleasure...

born in Tarrytown, right in the heart of little old Metropolitan New York. But that was a long time ago—thirty-five years, to be precise; it was 2612—and at the time all this happened, I hadn't set foot on Earth in twelve years.

And that was fine with me, just fine. I was perfectly happy where I was—and everything would have kept on being fine, if some white-collar needlehead in the home office hadn't taken it upon himself to decide that I had some vacation time due me.

I work for Transmat, Incorporated. My official job designation is Maintenance Technician First Class, and my salary is seven thousand Terran dollars per Standard Annum, adjustable to meet local economic conditions on whatever world I might be assigned to. For half of the twelve years of my employ, I had been stationed on Crawford IX, which is a pleasant Earthsize world some six hundred light years from Sol. It's inhabited by about two thousand Terran colonists and by various native forms of life, the most advanced of which is a kind of small monkey with

blue skin, no hair, and a bright green rump.

MY JOB was to look after the big matter-transmitter, which was Crawford IX's only link with the mother world. It would take about six hundred years, more or less, to send a message by radio from Crawford IX to Earth—assuming that any equipment on Earth was sensitive enough to make the pickup—and it would take eleven hundred years, approximately, for any conventional-drive spaceship to make the trip one-way. A faster-than-light ship, naturally, could do the trip in a couple of weeks—but there's the minor drawback that human beings can't survive hyperspace travel. So... faster-than-light ships are sent out unmanned, bearing matter-transmitters, and are landed by self-guiding feedback controls. After that, travel between Earth and the colony-world is carried on by Transmat, simply, instantaneously, and safely.

My job involved sitting around in the Transmat office on Crawford for the eight transmitting hours of each day,

making sure that nothing went wrong. A minor oscillation of the wavicle amplifier and a person might arrive at his destination inside out, you see. So I ran a daily check on the Thorson tube that powers the Transmat; I took heat readings; I sent through confirmations of functioning each day, before any transmission began.

The rest of the time I was free to loaf, and Crawford IX is ideally suited for loafing, with its unspoiled lakes and virgin forests, its clear blue skies and its utterly fresh air. There isn't any industry on Crawford IX, you see; the colonists won't permit it. Most of them are farmers—though there are a few composers, writers, and philosophers living here and sending their output via Transmat back to Earth for consumption there (and for pretty good money, too, may I add.) Life is simple, life is pure on Crawford IX. Every night there's a meteor shower that makes even old hands gasp for the very beauty of it. There are three moons that orbit in a dazzlingly-complex pattern, and so at night no shadow ever stands still.

A GOOD place to live, in other words. I liked it. I was looking forward to spending the rest of my life there, putting in my daily maintenance stint and then getting out into the fresh air with a book or a block-and-tackle (no newfangled magnetic dredges for *me*, thank you!) or a bottle of something easy on the gullet. And then, one balmy Fourth-month morning, after I had okayed transmission for the day, I scooped out the newly-arrived morning mail and found, sitting on the top of the stack, a Transmat flimsy addressed to *Mr. Edwin Reese, Maintenance Division*.

Ed Reese is me. And the only mail I get is my paycheck, once a month—and not due for three more weeks. I don't have any parents, brothers, sisters, wives, or mistresses back on Earth who might want to write to me.

I flipped the "Acknowledge Receipt" lever to show I had got the stuff; I dumped the rest of the colony mail into the basket for the postmaster to sort out later; and I slit my letter open with shaky hands.

IT WAS from the home office, New York.

It said:

A routine check of our records discloses that you have not applied for vacation leave since entering our employ in 2635. This oversight should be corrected at once. You are entitled to thirty-four Standard Weeks of accumulated leave, with full pay. Upon your acknowledgment a relief man will be sent out to handle your duties until your return from Earth.

Frowning, I switched on the vocotype and dictated an answer in my best official tones.

"I am in receipt of your communication regarding my accumulated vacation time, and wish to inform you that I have no wish to use this time on Earth. If it is possible for me to spend my vacation here on Crawford IX, send a relief man at once; otherwise, forget the whole thing and I'll continue as before."

I looked the flimsy over, checked it for spelling and punctuation, folded it, put the home office address on it, and deposited it in the pickup cubicle of the Transmat, along

with half a dozen packages scheduled to go out in the morning mail. I yanked the lever; cool green flame filled the cubicle, and a moment later it was empty.

FORGETTING all about the interchange of notes, I got going on my morning routine of maintenance. About two hours later, though, the bell rang, signalling an arrival. In the cubicle I found three cartons addressed to locals, a set of replacement bulbs I had ordered a week back, and a new note from the home office.

Be advised that the terms of your work contract require you to take regular vacations for the sake of continued efficiency. Through a bookkeeping error you have not been reminded of this clause till now, but the situation must cease. The quality of your work may be seriously impaired if you remain on continuous duty. We must insist that you leave Crawford IX as soon as practicable and return to Earth for a period of rest and diversion.

I scowled and made angry snarling noises deep in my throat. Dammit, I didn't want



Dave gave the cop a shove into the Transmat...

a vacation. I didn't want to go back to Earth.

I switched on the vocotype and started mentally composing my reply. I would say something haughty, to the effect that in twelve years—six of them in continuous stay on Crawford IX—I had a 100% safety record; that I detested Earth and loved the bucolic beauty of Crawford IX; that vacations, anyway, were for clods. I had a host of fine arguments, but none of them coped with the minor fact that, by contract, I was required to go back to Earth once a year for a change of scene, that I had been getting away with it all these years, and that I had no way of wig-gling out of that clause now.

I shrugged and dictated a brief note allowing as how I was willing to be relieved, if the company insisted. And that was how I came to make my visit to Earth.

MY RELIEF man popped out of the Transmat about a week later. By that time, I had tidied up all my loose ends, paid my outstanding bills in town, and generally forti-

fied myself for the departure.

The relief man was a kid of about twenty-five, with a pleasant grin and a lot of untidy blond hair. "All set to go?" he asked me.

"I suppose I am," I admitted reluctantly. "Come on—let me show you around this place."

I spent the next two hours briefing him. He knew his technical stuff, all right; I could see that there wouldn't be any problems about his care of the Transmat. I showed him the place where he was to stay, gave him a few tips about how to get along with the colonists, told him where the fishing was best, and that was it.

As I stood on the lip of the Transmat cubicle I said, "And remember—don't get yourself too comfortably ensconced here. I'm only going to be gone thirty-four weeks."

"Don't worry. I know I'm only a temporary replacement."

"Just don't forget it." I stepped into the cubicle. I felt a little uneasy about making the trip, even though I knew there was no chance of trouble. It was six years since I had

last made an interstellar Transmat jump. I was a little out of practice, you might say.

"Ready?" he called.

"Ready," I said.

HE THREW the switch. I saw the green flame coming at me, but before I had a chance to close my eyes it was dying away again—only I was somewhere else. Somewhere else, six hundred light-years away. I was in a Transmat cubicle the size of a small room, and there were faces looking in at me from outside.

"Mr. Reese?"

"That's right. Where am I?"

"New York office of Transmat, Incorporated, naturally. If you'll come out of there, we can discuss your vacation plans with you..."

"Sure." I realized with a tinge of embarrassment that I was shyly hanging back, inside the Transmat cubicle. I climbed out of it, a little uneasily, and found myself in a lush office.

Only "lush" is a rather feeble word for it. The furnishings could be contained in that term, but I can't think of a one-word description of the

walls and ceiling which would tell you anything. It took me a moment to realize that there *were* walls and a ceiling, because at first I thought I'd stepped out onto the surface of a alien planet, with no atmosphere whatsoever. Then I realized that where the carpeting ended, a three-dimensional mural gave the effect of weird terrain extending to a far horizon, and that the stars, moons, and planets visible all around were more of same, worked into the ceiling. (A little while later, I found that the "sky" rotated to give more of the planetarium effect, only it was no sky that anyone had ever seen, in any galaxy.)

I gasped, then realized that I was breathing perfectly good, pure—well, good at least—air. Four men who looked, by their harried expressions and thinning hair, like middle-level executives, were smiling at me.

"Welcome back to Earth, Mr. Reese," one of them said. "It was a terrible oversight, letting you go so long without a vacation..."

"I didn't mind," I said.

He ignored my interruption. "You have thirty-four weeks of

sheer pleasure ahead of you, Mr. Reese. Here we have your vacation pay, with accumulated interest..."

HE HANDED me a check. It was for just about one year's salary: I stammered something incoherent.

"Naturally," he went on, "you'll find Earth a bit strange to you at first. There have been twelve years of progress and expansion since you last were here, and no doubt you'll be a trifle unsettled at first..."

"Especially since," I said, "I don't know a blessed soul on the whole planet. I don't have any family, and after twelve years I wouldn't know where to find my old friends..."

He smiled. "Certainly. We understand the situation. Miss Dwyer, would you come in, please? This is Miss Dwyer of our secretarial staff. We've asked her to look after you for your first week on Earth, until you've grown accustomed to our ways once again..."

I gaped. Miss Dwyer, who entered from the left, was a tall, shapely girl with turquoise hair, golden eyes, and lovely,

full, kissable—but turquoise—lips. She was wearing a blouse transparent in front—only the transparent area kept shifting so you couldn't get a very long view of any one given segment of her anatomy—and a pair of skin-tight brown leggings. All in all, quite a sight. There was a good deal of casual and thoroughly non-erotic nudity on Crawford IX, but this sort of carefully-calculated display had my hormones in a whirl within seconds. It's one thing when a colonist woman peels to the buff for a refreshing afternoon dip—that happens all the time, and it's done with such innocence that you stop noticing it pretty quickly, believe it or not. It's an entirely different matter when a girl's blouse plays a startling game of peek-a-boo with you.

"Hello," she said. "I'm Carol Dwyer. You're Ed Reese?"

I nodded.

At that point the four executives faded out of the room with cheery goodbyes, leaving me standing stupidly gripping my vacation paycheck and goggling at Carol Dwyer. If I had known that anything as winsome as this would be tossed

in on my vacation, I wouldn't have waited twelve years to take it. I said as much. Carol flushed prettily.

CAROL SAID, "They tell me you haven't been on Earth in Twelve years."

"That's right. Six years on Monroney VII, and six years on Crawford IX."

She chuckled. "I suppose current Earth fashions haven't penetrated to such primitive places yet. You seem surprised at the way I'm dressed."

"It is rather—ah—startling," I said.

"Oh, turquoise is simply *the* color this year," she said. "It may look a little strange to see a woman with turquoise hair now, but you'll get used to it in a little while."

"Um. Yes. Turquoise," I said, keeping my eyes away from that tempting area of transparency that kept oscillating around her blouse.

She walked to the wall, nudged a peculiarly-shaped projection of "rock", and a section of the mural depolarized itself to become an ordinary window. As it cleared, looking even madder than the scene

there before, she said, "I've got a lot of things lined up for this week. We'll really do the town. You like sensie-shows? Scentoramas? There's so much we..."

I made a hollow gasping sound.

"Something the matter?" she asked.

"Out—there," I said. I pointed through the window at the chaos outside. We were on perhaps the eightieth floor of an enormous skyscraper. As far down as I could see, the air was crisscrossed with bridges strung from our building to others in the neighborhood. Far, far below motor vehicles whirled back and forth like mad little beetles. A sluggish river of many colors ebbed along—and I realized it was a mass of pedestrians jammed up against each other. Everything outside seemed noise, confusion, incoherence.

I resisted the temptation to race from the window back to the Transmat cubicle. Instead, with as much dignity as I could muster, I turned slowly around until my back faced the window.

I gulped. I was bathed with

sweat. "It's—pretty overwhelming, isn't it? I guess I'm not used to cities any more."

"Oh, it doesn't take long to get used to them."

"Maybe not." My legs felt watery. "Can we—can we get a drink in here, though?"

ONE OF THE executives had a private bar in his office, and Carol returned, a few moments later, with a crystal-clear drink that might have been a martini, except that it didn't taste anything like the martinis I remembered. But it had a marvelous calming effect on me.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Rocket fuel."

"That's a peculiar thing to call a cocktail."

"It isn't *called* rocket fuel; it *is* rocket fuel," she said.

"Huh?"

"It's an old alcohol-based propellant from the pre-Transmat days; they used to use it on the Moon runs before the Transmat was invented. Someone whipped up a batch recently for a gag and found out it was good to drink. It's the rage all over, now. Want me to get you another one?"

"Ah—no thanks," I said. I felt very strange inside. The drink had gone down smoothly enough, but the whole idea of drinking propellants didn't agree with me.

I was fortified by the drink, though, enough not to mind leaving the cozy security of the Transmat Inc. office and heading out into the street. We took an elevator that dropped so long I thought we were in free fall—the tallest building on Crawford IX is four stories high—and then emerged in the howling madhouse that was the street. It was a lucky thing there was a company limousine waiting for us. More than five seconds' exposure to the bedlam that is New York on an ordinary business afternoon would have snapped my mind for good.

CAROL AND I nestled back in the plush limousine and she started pushing buttons. There was no driver; five years ago, the automatic cars had been developed, she told me. All the old models were prohibited now from entering city limits, on the reasonable

grounds that it was no longer possible for a mere human being to pilot a car through New York traffic and survive.

I'll say this: I can't accuse the company of niggardliness. They had provided me with first-class guide service, a handsome car, and unlimited leisure. Of course, they can afford it; as the transportation company that makes the universe go round, they have more money to throw away on petty cash than most corporations earn in a century. But I couldn't appreciate their generosity very much just then; I was scared stiff.

Carol shepherded me around to the entertainment high-spots. We took in a scentorama, which is an art-form a bit too subtle for my colony-blunted esthetic perceptions, and then we went to a sensie show, which didn't require *any* esthetic perceptions at all. I'll confess it seemed a little shocking to me. Carol seemed to enjoy it, though, without any qualms. It wasn't subtle at all, unless you're the type that thinks there's something subtle about being made love to by a t h r e e-dimensional electronic

field-projection with tactile and olfactory presence.

FROM THERE, it was on to the Coliseum to watch android robots banging each other around in the gladiatorial contests. These, too, had been developed since my departure from Earth. The androids seemed to bleed real blood when they were wounded. I wasn't amused.

And, everywhere we went, the *people!* Thousands of them; hundreds of thousands. All making noise, shouting, yelling, laughing. Women in peek-a-boo dresses and worse; women with turquoise hair and green hair and blue hair and pink hair; women naked to the waist and covered with blue-and-yellow polkadots. The men were dressed more conservatively, but they went in a lot for beards cut in exotic shape and dyed unlikely colors. Carol assured me it was all in the normal evolution of Terran fashions—that if I had been on Earth while these styles were developing, I'd take them quite for granted.

Maybe so. But all I knew was that Earth had become a

wild and weird place where I wasn't happy at all. Twelve years of rural peace had left me unprepared for this sort of life.

I absorbed two or three more cocktails during the course of the day, and they damped my nerves down so that I didn't get a fit of shakes every time we stepped out of the limousine. It was reasonably late at night by the time the robot-slaughter ended. I had every hope that my fair companion was willing to call it a day and take me back to the hotel room Transmat Inc. had rented for me. I said so.

SHE POUTED prettily. "But the fun is just beginning, Ed!"

"Oh, no. We've been at it for seven hours, and you're just *beginning?*"

"I promised some friends of mine I'd bring you over tonight. They're having a party and they're just *dying* to meet you!"

I groaned quietly. "Look, Carol, I'm dead tired, and all this excitement the first day..."

"This? Excitement? Don't be an old fogie, Ed!"

"But I *am* pretty beat. Can't we meet your friends some other night? I'm going to be here eight months, you know..."

"Oh, all right," she said, but I could tell it wasn't. "I guess we can skip it, if you're so exhausted. But I told everyone you'd positively be there."

I could tell from her voice that she'd hold it against me if I refused to go. So I shrugged and said I would. She melted at once, called me a dear, and snuggled up against me in the back of the car.

En route, I tried to make that transparent spot hold still. I got slapped; things hadn't changed *that* much on Earth.

THE PARTY was being held at somebody's apartment in Nyack, which was just about eighty miles from where we had watched the robots slice each other up. I settled back and tried to get some rest. The car travelled at better than 150 mph along an electronically-controlled highway, and about half an hour later we were

pulling up outside of a lofty apartment house.

It was eleven P. M. Ten hours ago, I had been on blissful Crawford IX. Now, with three or four slugs of rocket fuel under my belt, and a king-size headache already developing, I was enjoying "rest and diversion"—so they called it—on good old Earth. As we shot upward in what felt like a jet-propelled lift, I shut my throbbing eyes and tried to calm down. I couldn't. Mournfully I told myself that after thirty-four weeks of this kind of life I *would* need a vacation—and a long one—on some planet far, far from civilization.

The party was being held in a four-room apartment, which Carol said was immense by current Terran standards. About fifty people were packed into the place, and they had all been there long enough to be well lit up.

The host, a lanky, civilized-looking fellow with a long purple beard and waxed red mustachios, threw his arm around Carol affectionately in a way that obscurely annoyed me, and gave me the big hand-

shake. "So you're the vacationing outworlder, eh! Well, we'll help you have fun while you're on Earth, friend! Drinks over there!"

AN ANDROID bartender was mixing them. I asked for and got a Rocket Fuel, not daring to request any of the old and familiar drinks for fear I'd be considered old-fashioned. I put the drink down my throat in a hurry, too; all these people packed into so little space made me feel uneasily claustrophobic. Parties on Crawford IX have room to spread out.

I had another drink, and another. There was dance music playing; Carol dragged me out on the floor, gave me a sketchy idea of what the steps were, and led me through it. It seemed pretty much like an Aztec fertility rite to me, though that may have been just because the dance floor was so crowded. I began to get that warm, hazy feeling about the universe. If I didn't drink, my nerves would be jangled by the raucous partying going all around, so I drank and gradually got accustomed to the racket. I began to feel mellow

and relaxed. I also eyed some of the other women at the party with a good deal of interest. They were nifty, by any standard—but in my eyes Carol outpaced them all. I decided I had been quite lucky to draw her as my guide to Terran civilization.

I MET SOME of the men. They seemed to be young execs-on-the-way-up, who made a lot of money but not enough to live within their means; they were uniformly good-looking, well-dressed, and (to my somewhat alcohol-soaked mind) witty. There was Monty Somebody and Alex Somebody and Dave Somebody—no one owned up to a last name—and around my eighth Rocket Fuel of the evening they began to wake up to the fact that I was a Transmat technician.

"Hey!" Monty said. "I got a great idea! Let's you and me and Dave and our friend Ed here go down to the Transmat office next block and have some fun."

"Great idea," Alex said.

"Great," Dave echoed.

"Swell," someone else said.

Before I knew what was

happening, I was being propelled through the crush and out of the apartment, flanked by Monty, Alex, Dave, and Somebody Else. I caught sight of Carol wig-wagging desperately at me from across the floor; then the door closed, and I was outside.

The fresh air did a little to sober me, but—alas!—not nearly enough. Like five wobbling-legged musketeers we went careering down the street, singing songs rich with the heritage of centuries, and turned the corner into a business district.

THERE WAS a Transmat office on the corner. Transmat offices are open round the clock, but there isn't much of a staff in them late at night. There was just one clerk in this one, sitting behind the counter reading a book, when we came rollicking in.

I still had only the dimmest notion of why we had come here; and I don't have a very clear recollection of the sequence of events. I recall Monty and Alex grabbing the unfortunate clerk, and dragging him into the back office where the Transmat machine itself

was. I remember Dave saying, "You know how to work this thing, don't you?" and I remember saying I did.

"Okay," Monty said. "Just for a starter, let's send this twerp off to Sirius."

Obligingly I set up the coordinates while the clerk jabbered in terror.

"H e a v e - h o , " they cried in unison, and tossed him into the Transmat cubicle. I pulled the lever; the clerk vanished in green flame.

"What now?" I asked.

"Us next," Alex chortled. "We wanta go on vacations for nothing!"

"Sure, sure," I said. "Leave it all to me!"

With the calmness of utter intoxication, I set up Transmat coordinates from memory. Alex clambered into the cubicle and I sent him off to Feinberg XII, a jaunt of nine thousand light-years. At standard company rates, a trip like that would set a person back \$5000 or more, but tonight everything was on the house.

"Me next," Monty cried—and off he went to Betelgeuse XXIX.

I WAS SETTING up coordinates that would ensure Dave's safe arrival on Hardecanut IV when the front door of the office burst open and a swarm of people entered. I recognized Carol, the host, and half a dozen other parties. There were also three men in the traditional garb of policemen, and I suppose I thought they were fugitives from a masquerade ball.

"Ed!" Carol shrieked. "What have you been doing? Where are Monty and Alex?"

"On vacation," I said with a snigger. "And now it's Dave's turn. This is fun!"

"Good Lord!" someone yelled. I turned my back on the crowd and finished setting up the coordinates. As I nudged the last dial into place, I felt a hand grasp my shoulder tightly.

I glanced around. It was one of the policemen. "That's about enough of this stuff, bud," he snapped.

I wriggled loose from his grasp. Dave gave him a push. He grunted and tumbled into the Transmat cubicle.

I yanked the lever; Carol shrieked; and the cop departed

for Hardecanute IV, thirteen thousand five-hundred light years from Earth.

I collapsed.

IF THERE is a Supreme Being who orders the events of this universe, I devoutly pray that He will not afflict me with more such mornings-after as I experienced the next day.

I was in jail, for one thing.

A speaker grid set in the ceiling said, "A visitor for Prisoner Reese."

Radiant bars of force that had been hovering in the air a few feet from my nose blinked out long enough to permit Carol Dwyer to step into my cell; then the force-field returned.

Carol was wearing an off-the-shoulder blouse that was off-the-bosom as well, at least so far as her left breast was concerned. She wore mildly-translucent trousers that might have been sprayed on; but the effect was totally lost on me. I surveyed her out of bloodshot eyes, and said finally, "Okay. When do they execute me?"

"You really went wild last night, didn't you?"

"Did you come here to rub it in?"

She sat down facing me. I put my head in my hands.

"I didn't realize how secluded from civilization you'd been," she said. "If I had known how small the colony is on Crawford IX, we would have gone a lot slower in introducing you to Terran culture again."

I merely groaned. "How much was the damage? And have they got everyone back yet?"

"THE POLICEMEN, the company clerk, and Monty are back. There isn't any word from Alex yet, but I suppose when he sobers up he'll explain to the authorities, and they'll send him back."

"What's it all going to cost?"

"Upwards of \$75,000, by economy-class rates."

"Ten years' pay!"

"Poor Ed," she said soothingly. "Why don't you try to get some more sleep? Everything's going to work out okay."

"Glad you think so," I said sourly.

She left, and I tucked my

aching head under my arms and slept some more. A few hours later she was back, with the news that Alex, very overhung, had checked in from Feinberg XII shortly before.

She also had some good news.

"I had a talk with some of the company brass," she said, "and they're going to let you off with a light reprimand. They'll absorb the cost of the rumpus last night."

"What?"

She nodded. I felt my headache ebb away. "I argued that it wasn't fair to hold you responsible for the impact of Terran civilization on you, after all the years you'd spent in the back woods. After all, it was partly their fault for letting you go so many years without a vacation. So they decided to forgive you—and to let you spend the rest of your vacation wherever you like."

AS YOU SEE, it all worked out pretty well, if you don't count the four-day hang-over I had after that party. A Transmat lawyer took care of the disturbance-of-the-peace charge; the costs of shipping

four human beings to distant parts of the galaxy were written off by the company; and I was shipped back to Crawford IX post-haste, to finish the rest of my thirty-four week layoff roaming the woods in peace.

Oh, yes, Carol came with me. It was time for *her* vacation, you see, and she decided to try a relatively peaceful place, for once. So she tried Crawford IX, and she liked it fine, just fine. Liked it enough to apply for permanent residency, as Mrs. Ed Reese.

So now it's business as usual for me: I run the Transmat office on Crawford IX, with Carol helping out a bit, and when the time comes, I'm going to take my vacation—right here on Crawford IX. Carol is a little homesick for Earth, but not homesick enough to really want to go back to all that noisy foofaraw. Earth may set the fashions for the rest of the galaxy, and Earth may make more money than any other world. It's an exciting place, in its way, only it's not for me—or for Carol, any more. We like it just fine here. As they say, there's no place like space!



UTILITY GIRL

by Basil Wells

illustrated by EMSH

Theo hadn't read all the fine print in her contract. She didn't know that, as utility girl, she was expected to cater to the needs of all eight regular crewmen throughout the three-year cruise.

During the early years of star hopping, after the problem of multiple light speed was broken, and light years were covered in months or weeks, space crews often needed extra hands. Utility hands, or apprentices, were signed on with the understanding that death or injury to the regulars might allow them to become crewmen. By use of intensive edutapes, they could be trained in a matter of days for the specialized duties. Pay was microscopic, but the glamor of star hopping, plus chronic unemployment on overcrowded Terra, kept the pool of men and women ever full.

Aboard a passenger liner, a utility tour could be very pleasant and instructive. To this branch of space hopping, ambitious young citizens of Terra and Mars flocked. The freighter service was something else, again; only the despairing or

apathetic signed up with it. Consequently, the utility berth on a freighter was often unfilled ...

THE INTERCOM grunted in the clipped Interling phrases of space, "Replacement Ute reporting aboard, sir. Wish to interview her?"

My jaws snapped. "Her? A woman this time is it? No! Show her to her quarters and warn her. No drinking or drugs!"

"Will do." The soft Lasdian voice, paused. "That all, sir?"



Grisa fought like a wildcat, trying to jab me with that hypo of sleep...

"If my wife comes aboard—
inform me."

"Yes, sir."

Was there a note of amusement or distaste in the voicing of these Interling words? After the voyage just completed from Aantar to Lunà, they could hold few illusions about my lush, lush of a wife. She drank often and heavily; she was addicted to the use of powdered *eduha* pods, a potent drug from Aantar. Yet, despite her excesses she was as shapely and fresh as the night when I first met her in a night club on one of the hothouse asteroids. Even after seven years of marriage, the very thought of her thrilled me.

Because of her, I had fired my old crew and taken 'out Aantarian registry for the *Khan*. My crew were alien humanoids—Lasdians and Aantarians. Only my fellow officer, Ralph Alpergen, of Terran ancestry via Mars, could speak our native tongue freely. And now Alpergen, astrogator and mate aboard the *Khan* since Aantar, was Grisa's latest conquest.... For three weeks she had not spoken to me; she was

gone Earthside, probably with him.

NO USE firing Alpergen at this late date; a hurried replacement might prove even more obnoxious. And, much as I hated the way my wife trampled on my sense of decency, I knew that I would do nothing. I was too afraid of losing her forever.

Perhaps this new utility hand might win Alpergen's interest, and send Grisa back to me.... I scorned the thought. Grisa's sultry, auburn-haired beauty outshone that of any drab female volunteer from the sunken gutters of Appalachia City.

I went back to checking the carbons and cargo slips of the supplies destined for Sebal, lone watery planet of a lusty, distant young sun charted as Groff D-3, and for the desert world of Kelso. In seven hours we blasted off for an overhaul at the asteroids and Factory In The Sky. At Factory, we would have the minimum of repairs. A freighter—especially one now under Aantarian registry—rated only patchwork overhauls.

In seven hours, we would

leave the lunar spacesite—to be gone for not less than seven years.

I wondered what Terra was really like. Grisa was due back from North America, where she had been born. I had never found time to accompany her. Always there were cargoes and owners' representatives and petty red tape to slash through. I had been born in space thirty four years before; my education came through spools of edutape and a single year at North Mars University, and Terra's vast underground cities could not be too much unlike the sunken lunar ports.

The *Khan* could blast off at any time now. The sooner the better. Cities or space stations seemed cramped and crowded after the vast freedom of space. The hours remaining would drag.

Cargo slips, storage manifests, union cargo thumpers' demand for overtime, demands for more economy from the other partners, and a fistful of charges from stores and hotels, Earthside.... A final check-off of the thousand and one minor items on requisition, and supposedly delivered—not the

least of which was warfarin to tickle space rats' palates.

THE INTERCOM rattled. " 'Lo, Glen." The throaty, almost hoarse voice made my stomach knot. "I'm back."

"So I hear," I managed, trying to keep my voice toneless.

"Alla space kinks unjointed," Grisa said. "Wait'll you see dresses'n gowns I bought." She laughed, a low broken gurgle like a pleased child's. "All's forgiven isn't it, Glen?"

I felt my teeth grate together and lock. But she knew. If she crooked her little finger or smiled....

"I'll be in your cabin," she whispered. "Something lacy, and black, and cool.... In an hour, Glen?"

"All right, Grisa. Sure.... And this time we'll really stick together. Right?"

"No more wild orbits," Grisa's voice said creamily. "I promise."

Silence. I looked down at the thinning stack of reports and bills. Forty minutes should do for them.

Resolutely I pushed the pink and black and auburn image of my wife from my brain. I

must finish this quickly, go to her, and then ready the ship for blastoff. The blood sang and throbbed in my temples and pulsed in my throat. For the moment, I was the luckiest man on Luna.

"SO THAT is what the hot-house asteroids are like."

The words were soft and not intended for any other ears than the speaker's. She was polishing the reddish-veined metal legs of the ship's chart room tables, and watching the visual plate that monitored our approach to Asteroid 714. She was plain-featured, eyes wide and gray, and her brown hair pulled back severely. In shapeless gray coveralls and a limp cap of the same color, she seemed but a masquerading child.

"Ah." I studied her. Three days out and this was my first glimpse of the new ute. "You're the utility hand?"

"Yes, Captain," she said, a faint dimple denting her tanned right cheek. "I am Theodora Ellson."

"Look plenty young," I grunted, chewing all the while at an unlighted cigar. They were always unlighted aboard a

freighter. "Most of our female utes are middle-aged. Experienced hands."

"Oh I can learn, Captain, sir," she protested. "Tell me which edutapes to study. I'm sure I can carry out my duties satisfactorily."

She tucked a stray lock of hair back into the coiled mass at the nape of her neck, and I scowled. She sounded, and appeared, little like the usual worn flammers who signed aboard.

"Why'd you sign up, Ellson?" I demanded gruffly.

She blushed, her plain face momentarily averted. It was a beautiful bit of acting, I thought—probably done by holding her breath or some other studied tension. I felt disgust and anger.

"It's my fiance. He's an engineer on Sebal. He was to send for me in eight years." Her tongue was running away with her words, so rapidly did she talk.

"But after five years, with no word—not that I could expect any until next year—I quit my job out in Utah and came to the Moon to work my way out to join him."

A pretty story! These women off the streets of Appalachia City's sunken levels all have them. And yet. . . . Her eyes were clear and bright with unshed tears— As though she feared I would censure her or put her out the airlock.

SHE COULD have heard the glamorous tales, or watched the vid-dramas that glorified the impossible romances of utes and wealthy passengers aboard the passenger space liners. The more sordid side of life for a female ute aboard a freighter is seldom widely publicized. If so, she was in for a shock.

"You can leave the *Khan* here among the hothouse asteroids, or at Factory In The Sky, Ellson," I said curtly. "Until then, you are relieved of any duties."

Tears came into the woman's wide-spaced eyes. Her hands spread wide, pleading. She was already on her knees where she had been working.

"Please," she begged. "Don't make me leave the ship. I must go on to Sebal!"

I shrugged and prepared to leave the cabin. I thought bet-

ter of it, however, and jabbed a thumb at her. "Do you think any man will want to marry you after you've served three years as a ute aboard a freighter, Ellson?"

"Why not? The pay is low, but the edutapes will improve my mind and earning potential. Of course he will want to marry me."

I laughed harshly. "Then he cares greatly for you, or little for his own reputation. To marry a woman who has catered to the eight crewmen of a star freighter for three years, and to do it willingly " I shook my head. "Is he really that broad-minded?"

Theodora Ellson's face grew white and twisted. Her eyes were dark with shock and disbelief. She stood up.

"You mean to say *that* is part of my duties?" She looked down, her pale skin flooding red. "All the crew. . ."

"It's in the small print, Ellson."

"What sort of work could I find on—or rather in—the hallowed asteroids, Captain?" she asked breathlessly.

"Waitress or factory hand, if you are lucky. There is little

choice. Unemployment is as bad here as on Terra and Mars."

THEODORA ELLSON'S back straightened and her mouth thinned with resolution.

"Never!" she cried. "I am going on to Sebal. Three years—I can endure the three years of being a ute—and then if Medson Blaiter does not want me, I will find work for which I have trained."

"Uum," I said, rubbing a finger along my newly-shaven jaw.

"Only one thing," uncertainly, "could you send me word, and permit darkness?" She paused, searching for words. "I could not work with them later, if I knew..."

I studied her downcast face with a grim sort of amusement. Let her know the suffering of waiting for the inevitable as I had known it. She was a woman like Grisa—not the same, not naturally amoral or a drunkard, but yet a woman—and she would pay. I hated all the women of the galaxy.

Already I had caught Grisa slipping out of the quarters of Alpergen—and this but a day after her promise of no more

wild orbits! I must have known, even while she promised, that she was completely without honor. Yet I could not give her up...

"An unusual request, Ellson. But—yes. I will establish that procedure." I relented for a moment. "However, while we are at Factory why not try to find something more congenial."

"Thank you, Captain," she said faintly, turning back to her polishing, "but my mind is made up. I stick."

I shrugged and left the chart room.

WE HAD SPENT four Earthside days in the null-gravity of Factory's vast hollow interior while repair crews went over the Khan. The five bulky Aantarians, and the three fragile-limbed Lasdians of my crew had spent most of their time in the shops and entertainment sectors that share the inner shell of the spinning cylinder with the factories. There the pseudo gravity is close to one tenth that of Earth, lessening with each inner level until the three-mile length of the spaceship yards is practically zero.

Grisa and Alpergen had disappeared until just before take-off, but Theodora Ellson had remained aboard to help me with the food supplies brought to us there from the hollowed crystalline asteroids—the Hot-house Asteroids. She had refused to visit the outer levels of the Factory but she did go with me to one of the sealed little worlds where hydroponics have brought green life and processing factories. But she had not applied there for work.

Now three space tugs had warped us out into open space, and we were in space drive—our first destination a year distant. A third of our cargo would be left on the desert planet of Kelso, and then it would be two years in space drive to Sebal.

"But what am I to do with my time?" Theodora Ellson, her final check of the supplies finished demanded. "Is there any objection to my using the technical edutapes?"

"You could gamble or play Aantarian *tchank* as the crew does," I told her. We were in the ship's lounge, Grisa, Alpergen, and myself. "Or Alpergen could teach you astrogation."

ALPERGEN'S graceful long body turned away from Grisa as his name was mentioned. He always moved smoothly, almost snakily, his dark eyes glittering. He studied the plain-faced ute in her ill-fitting gray coveralls. He laughed. "Why waste time on a moronic ute, when I can find something more interesting."

He looked down at Grisa and they both laughed. My fists clenched. I saw pity and embarrassment in the girl's face and I hated that even more. But I was Captain; a fight would solve nothing—it even might drive Grisa away from me for good.

"Sure. Use the tapes, Ellson," I said shortly. "In three years you should learn how to build a spacer as well as navigate."

She left the lounge and I followed a few minutes later. Grisa and Alpergen were too engrossed in their drinking and their conversation to know that I had gone.

I prowled the ship, checking on the pile and on the cargo. A silvery-haired Lasdian, long-limbed and nimble-fingered, was on duty. In space, the Las-

dians had proved their worth over we Terrestrians—they could withstand acceleration and extremes of temperature and gravity that would render us helpless. Only a lack of concentration kept Lasdians from becoming ship's officers; their minds were like quicksilver.

"The ship is clean," I commended him. "You have all done fine work, Anl."

Anl ducked his head, his enormous yellow eyes bright.

"It is ute who show us," he said, his narrow toothless mouth grinning. "Is good nest-keeper."

"Better than some we've had," I agreed, thinking of the surly male ute on the previous voyage. "Not so bossy."

THE AVERAGE ute—or even the average Terrestrian—considers all alien humanoids his inferiors; and this last one was an exaggerated example of his type. Eventually the Aantarians had refused to work with, or around him, and he had come to fear for his life. The blue-maned, golden-skinned giants are stolid, hard-working men, but even their

good nature could not tolerate a man like Hallek.

"We like ute, Theo," Anl said. "Teach her our talk. Aantar talk too, maybe."

I walked on, to the repair mech's control cubicle, and seated myself there. It was too bad that Ellson was a woman. A man could be groomed to take Alpergen's place—this would be his last tour of duty aboard the *Khan*. But a woman—no!

The helmet, with its thousands of needle-like filaments, I fitted down over my skull and adjusted. I closed the switch.

The hum muted and I experienced the familiar transition from a frail human body into the plastic-and-alloy robot giant that was the ship's repair mech. Through the scientific magic of the mentrol unit, my brain could see, and hear, and feel through this mech body as though it were my own. Not for us the clumsy space suits, the radiation burns, and the threat of sterility that plagued the early planet hoppers!

I stepped out of the retaining clamps and proceeded directly to the locks leading to empty space. I had inspected

the ship's interior; now it was time to examine the outer skin.

Ordinarily, this was a routine job assigned to one of the crewmen, but I enjoyed being away from the cramped ship's quarters for a time—even though it was by proxy. It was good to be alone.

THE YEAR-LONG hop to Kelso was much like any other voyage. The crewmen were on duty week-on, week-off—their off weeks spent in dreamless sleep if they so desired, a suspension of life induced by minute amounts of iberno. It was iberno that enabled the first slower-than-light ships to reach other solar systems—hops often lasted for several centuries, then. In fact our new star ships were contacting systems where the original expeditions were not due to arrive for hundreds of years.

Alpergen and my wife took their iberno shots regularly, but I refused mine. There was a growing suspicion in my mind that I might never come out of suspended animation once I entered it. With booster shots I could be rendered helpless, and

on a later hop my body could be *accidentally* destroyed. And my wife would inherit my percentage in the Aantarian registered ship—with Alpergen to captain it.

I had seen it in their eyes, a secret sort of impatience, every time I refused the shots.

Theodora Ellson, too, refused her iberno. She was busy with the edutapes and with her duties about the ship; gradually she took over most of Alpergen's work. Never had our records been so neat or so accurately documented. In one year, she learned more than many a seven year graduate of Terra's universities.

It was easy to forget that she was a woman. She was not like Grisa—not shapely or feminine or provocative. With her shortly-cut brown hair, and her bulky gray coveralls she resembled only an eager young man trying to learn about navigation and space.

SHE CAME to me often with questions that I could not readily answer; and as the long weeks passed I, too, used the dusty tapes to refresh my knowledge. We became friends,

our loneliness a mutual bond. I learned about her background, an orphan at eight, raised by a dour uncle in a mining village in Utah, and about the whirlwind courtship by the restless young engineering graduate from Appalachia City.

"And so your Medson Blaiter took the five thousand units your uncle left you, back to Appalachia with him," I said.

"He was going to furnish an apartment and buy a used hopper with it," she said. She laid down the control mechanism she was repairing there in the shop. "But apartments were hard to find."

I teetered back on my heels against the repair mech clipped to the bulkhead, my eyes narrowed with thought.

"And then Blaiter joined a mining expedition for Sebal," I went on, "and left without letting you know in advance."

"He couldn't, Captain; he had to decide at once. There was no work on Terra, or even Mars. Mining is almost dead—mines worked out or low grade."

"I realize that, Theo," I said impatiently. "But leaving with-

out contacting you—and with your five thousand..."

"That is to be invested on Sebal," she said quickly, "for me. He says it will be ten times as much by the time he sends for me."

I snorted inaudibly. There was no question in my mind about her *ambitious* lover. He had taken this simple rural woman's money and spent it with no intention of sending for her. She was probably only one of many that he had romanced. His enlisting for a tour in the mines of Sebal had meant escape from possible prosecution by *them*. *They* would never receive a ticket to Sebal.

Only, Theodora Ellson had decided to do something about it; she was following him on her own. In one year she had advanced, mentally, to her age of twenty-four. Given two more years of edutapes and Medson Blaiter would be confronted by a capable young woman demanding not only his name, but also the five thousand solar units—plus interest—due her.

SHE WAS a determined woman. She let neither dis-

tance or moralistic scruples stand in her way. I felt a gleeful sort of sympathy for Medson Blaiter. He would be getting what was due him once Theodora Ellson took control.

"Investments have a way of going sour," I said. "Be sure you check the receipts and records if that happens."

Her screwdriver clicked into its magnetized socket above the bench and she turned to me. Her wide-set gray eyes were hot, and there was a smear of grease across her nose from cheek to cheek.

"You think he's a worthless scoundrel just as my boss back in Utah said, don't you?" she demanded sharply. She blinked, wetly, and turned her head. "I can't blame you, though."

"Sometimes I think so, too," she confessed.

"We could all three be wrong, of course," I said, "but even if you lose everything you're qualified for several jobs. Mech technician, astro-gator, electronics tech, medical aide, pile super and a few dozen others."

"I am not sorry I left Utah," she said thoughtfully. "There must be some sort of ugliness

about any position, I suppose. So far, I have nothing to complain about on this ship, Captain."

Suddenly her mood changed. Her back straightened and her chin came up. With her streaked face and worn coveralls, and with her hands defiantly on her hips she was most pathetically unfeminine.

"Tell me, Captain," she said, "am I so hopelessly ugly that no man would ever want me?"

I laughed. "Theo," I said, "you're worth a dozen of the other kind. You've got something besides oversized glands and a baby face. You've got brains."

"Fine—w o n d e r f u l!" She stamped her foot on the deck. "But do you think any man would ever want to—to see me around year after year?"

"Of course. I mean it sincerely, girl. You'll meet some one on Sebal, or elsewhere, who'll be lucky enough to marry you."

She grinned and headed out of the shop with her repaired control mechanism. At the door she paused. "I don't believe a word of it," she admitted, "but it sounds real nice."

That was less than twenty

hours before we snapped out of space drive and dropped on cushioning rocket blasts to the dusty gray world of Kelso.

THE MINES of Kelso are spotted along, and near, the thousand mile length of Kelso's equatorial rift. In this vast gouge, varying from three to six miles in depth and fifteen miles in width, a series of small lakes and ponds provide vegetation and game animals. Whatever caused the rift—a glancing giant meteorite, a volcanic explosion, or a vast trapped bubble of gases—it alone made Kelso inhabitable.

We grounded on a mile-wide disc of an island—flat, grassless, and less than a hundred feet from the mainland ringing the lake's eighty miles of shoreline. A causeway of rocks and other debris linked us with the mainland, and already the eight-wheeled beetle-vans, sealed and air-conditioned against the thin air and dust of the upper levels, were growling slowly across it.

There were supplies for twenty different mines to be checked out and signed for and loaded. The Aantarians worked

with speed and all their strength at loading the vans, for I had promised them two days planet leave. And the Lasdians darted here and there, directing the van drivers and their helpers, but doing little actual work themselves. We drove ourselves for the five hours remaining of Kelso's short eight hours of sunlight, and an hour after the sudden moonless night fell, all cargo was unloaded.

THE CREW left for whatever dubious entertainment the bedraggled females from their distant home planets might afford, plus an oversupply of their native wines and other potent brews. I knew that the first week in space would see a sore and surly crew, but with a two year jump in prospect I could not refuse them liberty. The ship was silent again, save for the occasional tunk-tunk of the tireless female ute's tools in the workshop.

My mate and Grisa, as usual, had left for the settlement, and I was sitting alone with my bitterness and loneliness. A wife who ignored me, a mate who despised and hated me, a crew of alien humanoids, and

a homeless girl who would do anything for transportation to her worthless lover. The years ahead seemed bleaker and more useless, as I viewed them.

Half asleep though I was, sprawled in the broad padded seat in the ship's little lounge, I heard the soft shuffle of heelless scuffs along the corridor. That it was not Theo, the ute, I was positive; from the sounds in the workshop she was testing the ailing repair mech.

I watched through slitted eyes. It was Grisa, soft, full-breasted and seductive as ever, who came so silently from the corridor, with her right hand concealed at her side. And behind her, his usual insolent smile wiped away for the moment, peered the dark, snaky features of Alpergen.

"Sleeping, dear?" whispered Grisa softly.

I made no answer. Apparently my silence satisfied her. Now her hand came up, a gleaming hypodermic in it.

IBERNO! I had no doubt about it now. And Alpergen was allowing Grisa to shoot the frozen death into my bloodstream. No! The sudden shock

brought me clarity of mind. It was Grisa who controlled the two of us. It was her whim to destroy me and briefly install Alpergen in my place.

In that instant all my desire for her was wiped out.

The needle came down toward my sprawled leg, hesitated at the thickness of my soiled coveralls, and came up toward my bared forearm. And then I twisted away, pulled myself behind the seat. My left hand smashed the hypodermic holding arm downward, and it fell to the deck. Grisa's wet painted mouth gaped with a sudden cry. She tried to manufacture a bewitching smile in that brief instant, but there was nothing to draw from on so brief notice.

A gun crashed, and the wind of a slug cooled my left cheek. I saw Grisa's green eyes widen as a sliver of her ear lobe vanished, taking with it a gouge of her glistening red hair.

Without turning, I knew that this must be Alpergen. Now, at all costs, they must kill me. Somehow, later, it must appear to be an accident; now the important thing was to destroy me.

I dropped behind the seat,

dragging Grisa down atop me. As a shield she was effective, being almost as broad as I; but her body could not arrest the passage of a heavy bullet should Alpergen decide to fire.

"No, Ralph," my wife gasped. "Too noisy. Use the needles."

Tiny needles tipped with paralyzing crystals would come spewing from the weapon Grisa named. One of them meant momentary helplessness—a dozen meant coma and death, unless I were treated at once.

I FLUNG Grisa aside, deciding to make a dash for the corridor and weapons of my own while he changed his attack. I knew that one stitching sweep across our bodies would paralyze us both; *all* of the needles could not miss. And Grisa, desperate, clung to my hip pocket. I lunged toward the other door.

The pocket tore free and I staggered, only to resume my flight. But the needle gun was sewing; I heard its hum, and spun about and toward the weapon. It was too late to escape the room. My only hope now was to reach Alpergen.

I felt the slight sting of a needle along my skull and was going down. The paralysis was almost instantaneous.

This was how it was going to end, I told myself. I will be conscious, but helpless, while they decide my fate. Over the side, here or in space. And some story to cover with the crew.

We had all forgotten the ute. Not that one small woman, without any weapons save the tools in the shop, could do anything to save me; the logical thing for her to do would be to slip out silently and carry word to the authorities.

But Theodora Ellson realized that she had another weapon, and she used it.

I lay in such a way that I saw the doorway to the lounge behind Alpergen. Suddenly the repair mech—bulky and very humanoid in shape, despite the unrepaired section of pseudo-flesh over its right cheek—loomed there. Before its middle it held a section of spare hull plate as a shield. One hand gripped the plate and in the other was a heavy wrench.

THE WRENCH came up. Grisa cried out. Alpergen

sprang toward us even as the wrench fell, and fired his needle gun. In a moment he realized the futility of this and discarded it for his automatic. But the repair mech had followed.

Two bullets smashed into the heavy plate and ricocheted. The wrench swung, battered the gun from Alpergen's fingers, and then the repair mech hurled the plate flatwise against the mate's body. Alpergen went down, unconscious. And then the repair mech spun about and darted into the corridor.

I heard a shriek of rage and fear that cut off abruptly. Apparently Grisa had realized that Theo Ellson was controlling the giant robot, and she had tried to reach the control cubicle. But the ute had anticipated this.

The mech dragged a limp body, Grisa's, into the lounge and dropped it alongside Alpergen. Then it hunted out the automatic and the needle gun.

"You'll snap out of it in a few minutes, Captain," the rusty voice of the repair mech said. "Then you can call the police or do whatever you please."

I tried to answer but all I could do was stare my gratitude through watery unblinking eyes.

ONLY AFTER ten minutes of helplessness did feeling return to my legs and arms, and finally to my torso. A measure of numbness remained but I could get about and speak. The mech handed me the weapons and stood waiting.

"Thanks, Theo." I said, staring down at the scheming pair. "As of now you are mate and astrogator. We'll pick up another ute."

"What about these two?"

"Alpergen gets off without arrest, and with his pay and equipment; a police investigation would keep us here for weeks."

"And—your wife?"

"I'm cured. She's just another space girl to me now. She goes planetside along with Alpergen—plus all her gear, including *eduha* pods."

The repair mech turned away, picked up the metal plate, and left the lounge. And a moment later, freed of her mentrol helmet and her control

of the mech, Theodora Ellson rejoined me.

"I'll get their bags packed," she said.

Alpergen was struggling back toward awareness, groaning and muttering, and Grisa was conscious, but silent. I handed the needle gun to Theo.

"I'm dumping them both out the lock right now." I told her. "Maybe the ship will smell better then."

Theo smiled her appreciation as she swung the narrow-snouted weapon about in her competent small hand. I dragged Alpergen outside first, not caring too much when his body bumped into furnishings and bulkheads enroute. And then I carried Grisa, kicking and screeching obscenely, after him and closed the outer locks.

"Now," Theo said, "I will pack their gear."

"And I'll help you," I said.

The ship *did* smell better, I realized, and I saw more clearly and heard better. It was as though a sodden curtain of smog had rolled back from my brain—a cloud that had smothered me for all the months Grisa had been my wife. I felt alive again despite the linger-

ing numbness throughout my body.

THERE WAS one more little incident before the *Khan* blasted off for its touchdown on two year distant Sebal. A passenger liner had suffered a blow-up when its main pile's controls malfunctioned, and its passengers had escaped to Kelso. In the years ensuing most of them had found transportation to their destination—distant Sebal! Only five of them, three men and two women, remained.

With my mate and my wife gone, I had room for five passengers and so they came aboard. One of their names sounded familiar. He was a handsome, blond giant of a man, and very attentive to one of the middle-aged women of the party—the wealthy widow of a mine owner killed in the space disaster. His name was Blaiter.

So it was that I sent for Theo and they met in the chart room away from the rest of his party. I started to leave them but Theo grasped my sleeve. And Blaiter gasped as he saw who my mate was.

"Wait," she said, "this will be brief."

"Theo!" Blaiter gulped out. "How'd you get out here?"

"I came out to join you, Medson," she said, "on Sebal."

"But—I didn't... You didn't know anything about space. You couldn't sign on a ship."

"Oh that was simple." She laughed off-key and loudly. "I signed on as a utility hand. It wasn't bad; I learned a lot from the crew and the officers."

A series of expressions—disgust, anxiety, and sudden relief are what I ticketed them, flowed over his handsome fair features.

"Well," he said, and again, "well! That ends all thought of marriage of course. Why you're no better than a street walker, Theo! All those men..."

I started to say something, but Theo shook her head. "You mean you won't...even after you promised, Medson?" she demanded, her face hidden in her hands.

"I couldn't—even if I could forgive your actions. You see I was marooned here, penniless.

So I married a wealthy woman—Mrs. Holson."

THEO'S HANDS came away from her face and I was surprised to see that she was laughing. Then her features sobered. "Then you can hand over the five thousand units, Medson. You won't be needing them for us."

Blaiter paled and started to protest. I watched him going through his pockets. His total assets were slightly over three thousand units. Then I took a hand.

"We need another utility hand aboard, Blaiter," I said. "I can sign you on, your wages to go to the mate."

"No—no! I'll get the money from Clara. Just wait a little while."

Blaiter turned and hurried away down the corridor. I took Theo's arm. "Why didn't you tell the truth about being aboard an alien ship like this—that the crew considers you as sexually desirable as an Earthman considers a female gorilla or chimp?"

Theo grinned impishly. "You forgot to mention that fact to me when I signed on, too, Cap-

[Turn To Page 116]

android,

kill

for

me!

by Kate Wilhelm

illustration by EMSH

Zeke was the latest type of android, and he'd do what Helen wanted him to do, because she knew how to get around his built-in inhibitions ...

"WE SIMPLY must be going, dear. So nice of you to have us." Mrs. Snelley led the way, rising from her relaxor chair, and the others of the visiting group of ladies followed exhibiting various stages of unwillingness.

Finally. Couldn't they see how nervous she was? How they bored her?

"It is so glorious coming here. The house, the atmosphere, Zeke. Everything so out of ordinary." Cassi glanced around the voluptuous room enviously. "How I'd love to be an Intellectual, too."

"Hah! And be stuck with one man -all your life? And have ten children? Not for me." Mrs. Snelley was a tall, thin woman nearing forty; now she apologized swiftly to their hostess, "Oh, not that it doesn't suit you, Helen. It does. You look better each year. Five children by now, isn't it? You certainly don't show it. But for *me* to have to be married to the same man for twenty years is positively inconceivable."

"Can you think of any other way to build up the race?" Cassi asked indignantly. "They

She had forgotten one
thing about Zeke...



say before this plan was worked out that the brains of people were just vanishing."

"It isn't as if an Intellectual can't have...friends, but that sort of thing doesn't take the place of a good solid marriage—even if it does last only a few months." Mrs. Snelley patted Helen's hand with malicious sympathy and asked sweetly, "By the way, where is that pilot who has been so very attentive recently?"

"Oh, really! He's not even a friend; an acquaintance is more like it. By now he's getting ready for the Mars run." Helen shrugged off the hand still on her own. "I'm glad he's gone. He was beginning to tire me."

"Oh." Disappointment was evident on several of their faces. "We all thought that this time someone might stay around for awhile—until your time comes up again, anyway. Next month, isn't it?"

"Would twins count as one or two of the times?"

THEY COULD talk about that for hours. Why didn't they leave? Why must women say they are leaving and stay

talking in the foyer? And why had she ever started such inane gatherings in the first place? She was an Intellectual amidst mechanics and technicians. She had said she needed the stimulus of talking to other women, and there were so few in the Intellectuals that she honestly cared about. Stimulus!

"By the way, is the latest book film nearly ready yet? I'm dying to see it." The speaker was the youngest of the lot, her figure swollen with the first of the two children allotted to her. She motioned Zeke to help her with her cape.

"Almost finished. Another week or so ought to see it done," Helen answered.

As usual she was reluctant to discuss an unfinished work. And as usual they pressed for details. She was all but pushing them out...

"How exciting!"

"Is it another historical romance?"

"When do you get the chance to do your research? They tell me that you are as good as an historian."

"Is it true that Zeke helps you with the research?"

"Zeke is absolutely indispensable to me." She flashed a quick smile toward the entrance, where Zeke stood patiently holding another wrap. "He scans the film strips of the period I want and when I need a bit of additional information, he has it immediately."

She never failed to give Zeke credit for his part. Of course, the plots and characters were hers—but on the other hand, they never changed materially from that first book she had produced on learning that she had been classed an Intellectual. The idiots never noticed such a minor detail, however.

Helen's books all followed the same general pattern: boy meets girl; girl belongs to a king or general or president, or someone equally important; boy kills off competition by his own efforts and wins girl. Whether it was in the days of the great wars—or even stretching the imagination to near breaking, and going past the wars in history—the plot remained unchanged. The last chapter always described in detail the girl falling into the arms of the perspiring boy—usually stepping over the body

of the villain to get to that particular spot.

They were always best sellers. All women dreamed of being so won and dominated; even as they tossed their men aside, they longed to be taken by force. Helen dramatized it, put it in words and acts for them and they adored it and her, their own Intellectual. Who else among them had enough imagination to create such searing drama?

MRS. SNELLEY accepted her cape from Zeke and said with an elegant casualness, "We're to get a new android next month. Class T."

There were squeals from the girls.

"How marvelous. It will be able to go shopping. T's are very advanced."

"And it will make a fourth at bridge, won't it?"

"No, I think that starts with W. But T's are good."

"Not like Zeke, of course, but so much better than my O type, which can't even turn on the televue properly. I do wish I could find a single doctor or lawyer so I could get a higher type." The pregnant girl pout-

ed looking enviously at her more fortunate companion.

"After your figure is back, you probably will; it takes time."

They all had their capes finally and were on their way toward the transit belt that would take them to their respective homes.

Helen didn't wait for Zeke to tidy and leave the room before she made her call to the space port.

He heard, and she knew it, but she didn't care—ZKL-19379 was a thing, a man made thing. If he listened, what difference could it make? He was hers to dictate to, to rely on for information, to finish her manuscripts for her, to take the place of a houseful of human servants.

"Hello, darling... I had to see you again before you left... But I told you, I'll think of a way... Promise me you'll come back... Thanks, dearest. When you return from Mars, I'll be free—it's an oath." She watched his face fade from view as if someone were adding layers and layers of gauze between them, until finally he was gone.

ZEKE ASKED the sculptor husband if he had any preference for dinner that evening, or any errands to be done. He typed the morning's dictation from his memory relay circuit, erasing it as the words appeared on the paper. The words were gone, but the mood of them, the tone of them, the basic meaning of them was forever a part of him once she spoke them aloud. The memory circuit was blanked however, ready for the next morning's work. He prepared the preliminaries for the dinner and then left on some errands, his marked forehead making people on the belt nudge one another and point him out. Z types were rare. Their very markings made them eligible to enter, without question, wherever they were sent. Everyone knew that they were the epitome of man's creative ability—and, as such, incapable of doing wrong.

From her bedroom window, Helen watched Zeke advance to call her husband to dinner. The statue he was doing was of the twenty-fifth World President. A massive thing in beautiful Florentine marble, black

streaked with red and grey, it towered over the puny head of its creator. The best work of the world's finest artist.

Her manner when she had first approached Zeke with the problem had been oblique. No direct order or request. A hint. If the statue fell, it would surely kill the man working so concentratedly on it. He would be unaware of footsteps, would be so completely immersed in what he was doing that he wouldn't know anything until it hit. Naturally she couldn't do such a thing. The law would be swift, and she would go to the hospital. Afterward she would be among the lowliest. No, she couldn't possibly do such a thing. But then, it was foolish even to surmise on it, because who could imagine what kind of strength it would take to topple such a heavy object anyway.

But he made life so hellish for her. Had always done so in their ten years of marriage. Zeke knew; he had seen and heard. Always scolding her, and deriding her friends, and refusing to have anything to do with her until it was time for her to conceive again. She

worked hard; she deserved a slight measure of happiness from life.

Then the look of incredulous shock had passed her features. She was sorry. Zeke must forget it; she had gotten in the habit of thinking of him as a person. It had been wrong to name him in the first place. Everyone had been startled by it, and had warned her not to do it, but she had—and now she saw that they had been right. He wasn't a person to whom one should tell one's innermost thoughts.

SHE WATCHED avidly as Zeke paused, the statue hiding him from the sight of her husband. Zeke was strong—stronger even than the men who had put him together. His muscles were thin steel and nylon interwoven. He put one shoulder against the statue and almost in slow-motion tridimensional fashion it began to fall, gathering momentum until the crash it made when it hit shook the house and the woman gazing out.

For a while, the finality of it stunned her; then the thought of new freedom gained control.

She called the spaceport, hoping that the Martian liner had not departed yet.

The reply was like a physical blow, and it seemed as if someone else were talking and she was listening to someone ask if there were any survivors. A useless question—there never were when it happened a take-off. Helen turned off the android at the other end, dully, and raised her face from her hands only when she heard Zeke return.

Zeke knew her books, and he couldn't be expected to discern between fact and fiction. He

knew that a woman always loved the one who could vanquish her enemies for her—who freed her from bondage to a man she detested. That was why she hadn't had to command him to...

But there had been two of them, and Zeke had done more than tumble the statue; he had fixed the ship. He would expect her to be grateful, to melt into his arms and forever after find the bliss she had always sought. To the victor...

The Z on his forehead glowed softly as he advanced, steel arms outstretched...

The state demanded that all who flouted the genetic law be publicly tried and disgraced. Then Van, state prosecutor, met a girl named Rhea, and knew forbidden desires that made the two of them

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REED

*It all started when the
Dingle gronked his
twiddly...*

IT'S FUNNY, but when you adopt a cat, ten times out of ten it turns out to be a female. Take Herman. I came into work in the height of the trading season one spring, up to here in things to do, and I found this cat asleep in my bottom drawer. The cat stretched and purred a little and then climbed out of the drawer and began rubbing its back against my ankle. Herbie Witkers, who has the desk next to mine, was watching. Herbie has a cat of his own, and I guess he knows all about cats.

"Gee, Willie," he said. "Looks like he likes you. Why don't you take him home?"

"I dunno, Herbie. I don't know if I should..."

The cat was twisting itself around my feet, rolling and batting at my trouser legs. We fixed up a piece of paper and a string for it to play with and got it to take a little milk. None of us got much done that morning. Herbie seemed almost happier than I was when I decided to take the kitten home.

That morning, I dubbed the cat Herman and became the father of one. About a year later the cat's name was Her-

mione, and I was the father of seven. Later, it was sixteen, and then...well, you know cats.

By that time, I had to park my Jumper-X in the street. There just wasn't room for it. It got so I was afraid to go into my garage, because there would be a seething mass of cats, mrowling and carrying on and pretending to be glad to see me. From the first, I was pretty sure they were all fakers. When I tried to pet some of them, or went "Awwwww, puddy, awww..." the only one in the whole mob to come over and rub against me was good old Hermione. Pretty soon I realized I had a bunch of freeloaders on my hands. Besides, the whole place was beginning to smell like a Martian *mooft* corral. I decided to do something about it.

IF YOU know cats, you know how hard it is to give them away. The first cat you get is always nice, but ten times out of ten its kittens are scruffy ingrates that seem to stick around home like an Arcturan *aaantaaan* waiting for its mate. I tried taking a few to the

trading post with me, but it turned out Herbie had been there before me. He'd given kittens to everybody in the office and all the ground crew, and half the extra-Ts who brought in goods from other planets. When I asked him if he'd be interested in some of the batch I had at home, he just laughed.

I learned a lot about kittens in the next few days. I learned that when you're talking to a prospective taker, you always refer to the kitten as *he*. I learned that almost every neighborhood kid will use up one or two kittens a year, and that you have to give the kid the cat when his parents aren't home. If you're smart, you wait till they're out of town. I learned that, after you've dumped the first ten or twelve, you've reached saturation point and, mortality rate notwithstanding, it's nothing but puddies for you from then on in.

That's why I was so glad to see the Dingles. If you haven't heard of the Dingles, it must be because you don't own a cat. The Dingles are the Lord's gift to humanity.

I think I was the first Earth

person to meet one. I can't tell you who they are, or where they came from; the Phyletic Intake Bureau can't tell you either, and they spent two years trying to trace them. The talk now is that they came from another galaxy altogether; their ships are like nothing we've ever seen before.

When the first Dingle came, I was all alone in the trading post. Except for Hermione. I like to work in the office alone, and any day you stay after four o'clock, you're bound to be alone. Government offices are that way—everybody shoves off as soon as the whistle blows. Anyway, I like the silence, and I thought Hermione might like a little peace and quiet away from her brood (there were about a hundred of them in the garage at that point), so I had her tucked in the bottom drawer where I'd first found her. I was working away on nothing in particular, and Hermione was snoozing when the first Dingle came in.

HE LOOKED just like those pictures of flying saucer men they used to have in comic magazines. He was green all

over, and his head and his ears came to points; he had round pie-eyes and no mouth to speak of. I'll never understand how his ship got in through the scanner network. He leaned across my desk and his eyes rolled a little. He said: "Oooooooooodely? Oooooooooodely?"

To tell you the truth, he made me feel pretty crawly, but I stood up and tried to look as dignified as I could. "I represent the E.B.T.—the Earth Board of Trade," I said. "Welcome to our p'lanet. Have you been formally admitted? I haven't seen your picture in the Registry office..."

He straightened up and banged one feeler across his chest. "Oooooooooodely? Oooooooooodely?"

"I beg your pardon..." I gave him the same routine again. I speak about twenty-eight dialects, and they cover most of the galaxy, but I'd never heard anything like this.

"Oooooooooodely?"

I felt creepier and creepier. "I'm sorry, I..."

Then he gronked his Twidly and everything was all

right. He was talking perfectly good English, and he was the sweetest thing I'd ever seen. One minute he was bubbling at me and I was ready to start clawing at the wall; the next he gronked his Twiddly and suddenly he was talking in an Oxford accent and I loved the guy.

A Twiddly is like nothing you've ever seen. It's something that all Dingles have, and it turns out they can't even talk to each other about it. The closest analogy I can draw is the Con-Tax Translator—that heavy wire shebang our star-crewmen use to talk to extra-Ts; but a man wearing a Translator can never forget that five pounds of machinery he has on his back, while gronking your Twiddly seems to be as natural as taking a deep breath.

AFTER this Dingle gronked his Twiddly, we had a nice talk. He said something sad about trying to get used to being without it, but I brought out a bottle I keep in a drawer marked "Classified" and he forgot all about it and cheered right up. Things probably

would have been stiff and official if he'd come during the business day; but as it was, we sat and talked about this and that as cheerful as old friends on a picnic. I didn't even feel guilty about not calling the Intake office because this Dingle was so charming.

He was just on a friendly visit, he said; he was sightseeing in the Galaxy, and he'd decided to drop in on us. He was getting ready to go when Hermione uncoiled, oozed out of the drawer and began playing around his bottom feelers. When he saw her, he got down on his hands and knees with her and forgot all about leaving.

He offered me twenty-eight million *granna* for Hermione. It's funny, but you get attached to cats. Even if Hermione did betray me to the tune of some hundred kittens and grandkittens, I loved her, and I wasn't going to let her go. But if he wanted some of her kittens—or her kittens' kittens—or her kittens' kittens' kitten... I told him about the batch I had at home.

"You mean there are more? Are there many more like this

on your planet?" He was as happy as Herbie had been the day I took Hermione home.

"Well, they aren't *exactly* like her," I told him. "I mean—there are black ones and brown ones and spotted ones and striped ones, and I've got this really cute gray one..."

"But they are all made on this same plan—four legs, ears, tail, whiskers..." He was getting pretty excited.

"Sure." I started thinking about getting my garage aired out, and being able to put my Jumper-X in it again. "And you can have as many of them as you want. Come along with me."

We went to my place, and the Dingle put this sort of transparent, spider-webby net around all the cats but Hermione, and took them back to his ship.

"The people of my planet will be grateful to you forever," he said, as he tucked the last cat in and blasted off.

HE WAS BACK the next day, with twenty more Dingles and a ship the size of a city block. The Dingles were as charming as could be (after

they gronked their Twiddlys) and said they couldn't get enough cats. They offered to pay any amount of *granna* we asked, and were amazed that we'd let the cats go for free. Even the government pushed through an okay on the export when they found out that the cats were all the Dingles wanted to take. You couldn't say no to a Dingle.

I will admit we had a little fuss from the SPCA at first, but when we assured them that the Dingles wanted the cats for pets (what else *could* they want them for? Dingles are herbivorous), they said something about the whole thing's being a boon to *cātdóm*, and brought over a whole bunch from their Animal Shelter and Resort. The word spread fast, and pretty soon every cat-owner on the sphere was shipping in a batch of kittens. I will say this for us cat-owners—we were loyal enough to keep the cats we'd started out with—it was the offspring we wanted to send. It was a cinch I wasn't going to part with Hermione, but I sure was glad to get rid of those kits.

Operation Catlift was some-

thing to behold. Thousands of people came to the Spacedome and waved banners and cheered as loading began. Tabbies, Toms, cats, kits, Maltese, Persian and Siamese, calicos, Manx, tigers, angoras, alleys, rank on rank they came, seething down the shute and up the ramp into the Dingles' ship, carrying on and caterwauling as if the Judgement Day had come. It was magnificent. The band played and there were speeches before the airlocks closed, and the Dingles promised us they'd be back next year, anxious for another batch.

"You have done a generous thing for all of Dingleland," one of the Dingles said. Then he bowed two or three times and slammed the lock. When the ship blasted off the crowd went wild.

Well, we all sang and danced for a while and then I took Hermione home, and nobody saw another Dingle until six months later.

I WAS IN the office working late again, when the original Dingle I'd met came in. He

gronked his Twiddly and we talked.

"I came to thank you for Earth's magnificent gift to us," he said. "If it hadn't been for you—words cannot express..."

Suddenly my back hair stiffened. "What are you doing?" I asked. He was gripping something familiar in his feeler.

"I'm merely gronking my Twiddly, Earth friend. You have seen me do it many times."

"Yeah, but isn't that a new type of—gronker you're using?"

He flushed a deeper green and admitted it was. "You see, your gift to us has done us immeasurable good. Our native *kara* plant, which has supplied the Dingles with stylos—what you call *gronkers*—for generations, has become extinct. Our race faced the same fate if we were left without stylos, for we could not communicate. Your magnificent gift to us has supplied the race with enough stylo material to last as long as we have life, and we are eternally grateful."

I got a little more curious. "Well, what do you do with—

the *rest* of our gift, after you use this part of them for gronkers?"

"Oh," he dug his feeler into the carpet and avoided my eyes. "We throw them away. Again, friend, I only wanted to say thank you. We will be back in six months, at which time we hope to pick up another load. Thank you, thank you..." He started backing toward the door. I had to stop him.

"Uh—Dingle."

"Yes, Earth friend?" He gronked his twiddly again so he could talk to me, and I winced.

"Something I oughta tell you. Look, some of your other Earth friends might not be just like me. They might not understand the special way you use that—gift we gave you."

HE FADED from green to chartreuse. "Oooooodely?"

"Yeah," I said. "Sad but true. Not everybody would understand. So, pal..."

"Oooooodely?"

"Keep it under your hat, huh? And keep those new gronkers of yours out of sight."

"For you, Earth friend. any-

thing." Self-consciously, he slid his new gronker up his sleeve, and slipped it out again so that just the tips were showing. "Oooooodely?"

"That's fine," I said.

"Thank you, thank you, kind one." The little guy was bowing and scraping all over. "Thank you, thank you..." he stopped gronking his Twiddly. "Thank you...ooooodely?" He backed out the door.

So there you are. The Dingles are great cat fanciers all right. They fancy the whiskers, and once they've pulled them out, they throw the rest of the cat away. What would happen if the world found out?

If I know the SPCA, the Catlift exports would stop. None of those pet philanthropists are going to stand for the Dingles' pulling our cats' whiskers that way. And *throwing them away*—I can imagine. Yes, if they find out, that'll be the end of Operation Catlift and we'll be back where we started, with rafts and droves of kittens and no place for a man to park his Jumper-X.

Sure it's cruel to debeard those cats, but five'll get you ten the cats the Dingles *think*

they've thrown away are thriving somewhere on Dingelian wastes.

Besides, Hermione has just presented me with another litter, and they're milling and seething in the back yard.

So what if they hurt the puppies an iddy biddy bit. Awww...

I'll never tell.

Only one thing. There's been more than the usual moiling and milling in our neighborhood of late, with kits and

cats, who are loners at heart, getting together for conferences and choruses and caterwauls. If I didn't know better, I'd suspect that they'd guessed about the Dingles and were planning some sort of direct action. If they found out for sure that I'm the guy who's keeping Operation Catlift going, I'd be in for real trouble.

And I think Hermione's on to me.



Which Side Are YOU On?

"I like your new style cover very much. As far as I am concerned, it has both dignity and eye appeal. I think it's very striking and hope to see more of the same idea."

"Don't like your new cover. No eye appeal to me. I almost passed it over on the stand because it looked like something else. No like."

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weapon master

by A. L. Caramine

*The colonists wanted the
shiny new weapons, and it
looked like a good deal,
trading in all their old ones
as a down payment...*

THE LITTLE ship screamed down from the sky and passed rapidly over the bright pastel roofs of the village. It banked sharply, and retraced its route, heading for the small spaceport two miles away. With the ease of long experience, the pilot abruptly stood his ship on its tail and set it down in the center of the black blossom scoured clean by its own fire.

The ship seemed to quiver like a tuning fork as it struck ground; certainly the scars and deep pocks that nearly obliterated its original finish danced briefly in the eyes of the port watch. The gangling teen-ager stuck with the detested chore hurried from his cubbyhole office to meet the new arrival; visitors were few and far between on outlying worlds such as this. Outside of the bi-monthly trade ship, there hadn't been more than three strangers in the equal number of Earth-years the colony had been established.

The lock eased open with that infuriating slowness of being atmosphere-bound. Outward pressure being equal with inward, the tiny worm-driven

motor had to do the job all by itself. The boy waited impatiently, scuffing his feet on the discolored tarmac, but finally it was open enough to permit the appearance of a head.

And a most improbable head at that. Large saucer ears stuck straight out from a head that apparently been run through a very fine meat chopper and repaired by being drawn through a cold rolling mill. As if that weren't enough to permanently ruin any vestiges of beauty, buck teeth seemed to stick almost straight out. The whole mess was crowned by a very few straggly colorless strands, half-heartedly laid across his scalp.

The boy gulped, feeling his adam's apple surge up and down against the collar of his t-shirt. "Huh... Hi, Mister," he said, making an effort to be cheerful.

"Howdy, boy," grinned back the apparition. "Hear you're plannin' to have yourselves a little war hereabouts."

THE MAYOR inwardly shuddered everytime he looked at the visitor's face. The rest of his body seemed fairly

normal, but then he had not revealed it, so the Mayor didn't want to take any chances of putting his foot into his mouth. A wise man for such a small colony.

"Just what is your business with us, Mr. Jackman?" he asked, offering a bowl of the citrus fruit that was the main support of the colony. It was declined with a wave.

"Got something to sell you, Mr. Mayor," the visitor said, sipping at the virulent native wine. He smacked his lips in appreciation, and held his glass out for a refill. The Mayor performed the amenities of hospitality.

"What?"

"Hear you're havin' a little trouble with your next door neighbors," he said by way of reply. His pale eyes peered myopically towards the Mayor. "Kinda thought I might be able to help some."

"It's true that there has been trouble," admitted the Mayor, cautiously. "They've been poaching on our contracts, and so far we haven't been able to make them stop."

"Dealin's like that make a man mighty mad," said Jack-

man. "Sometimes can even make him shootin' mad."

"Perhaps. But you haven't answered my question; what are you selling?"

"Weapons, Mr. Mayor." He held out his glass again. The potent alcohol seemed to have little effect on his system, as he was drinking it almost like water. Already, he had consumed over three times as much as the Mayor, and the latter was very definitely beginning to feel the effects.

"**I** GOT ME the finest line of personnel weapons and field artillery in this entire section of the galaxy," continued Jackman. "My family's been in the business hundreds of years—my ten-times Great Grandad was a gunsmith back on Old America, in the days of the westward expansion. Fight any kinda war with my stuff, big or little."

"You can't be carrying anything like that in that little ship," said the Mayor, incredulously.

"Got samples of the more portable stuff," he answered.

"You decide you want to buy, I'll have two warehouse ships

here in three days at the outside. Got 'em cruisin' this sector right now, waitin' my call."

"I see." The Mayor leaned back in his chair and crossed his hands on his over-obvious paunch, his eyebrows raising as his forehead furrowed with concentration. Several moments of silence followed, during which Jackman refilled his glass twice. At last the Mayor spoke again.

"Our world of Newcastle is not overly rich, Mr. Jackman," he said. "I think I can safely say that the Council would most definitely be interested in purchasing some of your weapons. But enough to equip an army...?" He shook his head. "I don't know where the money would come from."

"How many people you got here, Mr. Mayor?" asked Jackman. "Mebbe twenty, thirty thousand?"

"Slightly over twenty-seven thousand at the annual census," he replied. "Why?"

"Then you must have some-thin' like six, eight thousand producing adult males, right?"

"Something like that; I don't recall the exact figures. Just what are you getting at, Mr.

Jackman?" He leaned forward and placed his elbows on the table, steeping his fingers.

"**W**ORLDS like this, based on a farm economy, usually have seventy or eighty percent of the producing population employed in the basic industry—in your case, as farmers. Now farmers, the galaxy over, are a hard-workin' breed of men. When they relax, they usually do it in the environment they know best, namely outdoors. The two most popular relaxations are fishin' and huntin'. Do you follow me?"

"I'm not sure," said the Mayor, slowly. "If you mean that most of our men already have weapons, I suppose you're right. I have a Marlin .004 needle rifle myself. But we can't wage war with hunting weapons! We need cannon, anti-personnel atomics and the like. Besides, Jordan's Delight—the colony we are fighting—is just as well armed as we, so we're more or less at a stalemate."

"That's where I come in. I'll sell you the new stuff." He leaned back and grinned, his teeth looking ridiculously like an open trapdoor.

"But I've already said we don't have enough money..."

"Hell's bells, man, ain't you got any sense?" The Mayor sniffed audibly, but Jackman ignored him. "Trade your small stuff in!"

"Trade...?"

"Sure. They'll easy cover the down payment on the new stuff; and for the rest, I'll accept your contract for ten percent of your credits with whichever of the banks you use, to run for a period of years sufficient to pay off the remaining cost. What better deal could you get?"

"I... I don't know. I'll have to call a special session of the Council."

"Fine!" Jackman stood up and stretched. "You want demonstrations, come on out to the spaceport in the mornin'." He held out his hand. "I think we're gonna be able to do business, Mr. Mayor."

THE LAST load of traded-in weapons swung up in the cargo hoist and disappeared into the gaping maw of the cargo ship. A moment later, the giant loading doors swung shut,

and towering giant shivered with the pre-take-off check.

Jackman held out his hand to the Mayor and the half a dozen members of the ruling council in turn, shaking each one vigorously. He grinned widely, and his face suddenly didn't seem so repulsive anymore.

"Thank you, Mr. Jackman," said the Mayor. "More than we can ever say, we thank you. If it hadn't been for you, those criminals on Jordan's Delight might have driven us to the verge of bankruptcy."

"Well, thanks yourself, Mr. Mayor," he said. "I owe you more than you owe me, even if those figures on my contract don't make you think so at the present." He patted his breast pocket, from which the gleam of official papers shyly peeped. "After all, I'm a business man, and I can't exist without people like you for customers."

AT THE FAR end of the tarmac, a thousand yards away, a man used his crowbar to open one of the long stacks of cases. Reverently, he lifted out one of the gleaming atomic rifles. Carefully, he inserted an

energy source in the weapon's magazine, being doubly sure that it was locked in place. He hefted it for a moment, marvelling at the perfection of his balance. Then, with the careful ease of an accomplished hunter, he lifted the butt to his shoulder and sighted towards a distant tree.

"Are you sure you can't stay over a few more days?" asked one of the council members. "The whole colony's outdone itself on the festival that's starting today—Lord knows, it's the first time we've had a reason for one since we landed here. We'd be more than honored if you'd only agree to be the guest of honor."

"Hate to miss the affair," said Jackman, shaking his head reluctantly. "Always did think that small-town parties were more fun than anything. But I'm afraid I gotta get back to the office and check on things there. Left my wife's brother in charge, against my better judgment, and I'm gettin' to think I've been away too long as it is. Might not have a business to go back to!" He offered his hand around again.

The hunter held his aim on

the gnarled trunk of the tree for a long moment, making sure that there could be no possibility of his missing. Slowly, his finger pressed on the trigger, forcing it back to contact.

"Maybe someday I'll get back here on my next swing through this sector," said Jackman, seeing the crestfallen looks of the men before him. "You've got a real pretty planet here. But I gotta go." He turned and climbed into his ship. The lock door began to close with its usual slowness, and he waved at the group just as the hunter finally closed his contact.

The tree stayed unharmed.

Dumbfounded, he looked the weapon over, making sure the safety was off and the power connected. He squeezed the trigger several more times before admitting that he held a dud. Then he turned and ran towards the distant ships, shouting at the top of his voice. "We've been gypped!"

The Mayor and the Council moved outside the blackened area of tarmac, and flame immediately shot from the tubes. In harmony, the cargo ship began firing also, and the two

ships slowly rose on their columns of destruction.

The hunter ran up as they disappeared into the heavens.

"**Q**UIET, YOU!" Jackman said to his grumbling stomach. He took another handful of soda pills, and it momentarily subsided, although the grumbling was still there under the blanketing cover of fizz.

"Lord, that swill was awful," he said, remembering with distaste the taste of the wine. "I hope that this next world has something better in the way of liquid refreshments." He watched Jordan's Delight swimming up in his screen.

"Wonder what the Mayor's gonna do when his constituents ask him how come he let himself be took in by a pacifist?" He chuckled at the thought.

The little ship screamed down from the sky and passed rapidly over the garish artificial-thatched roofs currently popular with the inhabitants of Jordan's Delight. It banked sharply, and retraced its route, heading for the small spaceport a few miles away from the capital village. With the ease of

long experience, the pilot abruptly stood his ship on its tail and set it down in the center of the black blossom scoured on the tarmac by its own fire.

The gangling teen-ager holding port-watch dashed from his cubbyhole office to meet the new arrival.



Readin' and Writhin'

Book Reviews by CALVIN M. KNOX

MAN OF EARTH, by Algis Budrys. Ballantine, 35¢.

Algis Budrys' second novel, greatly overhauled and revised since its original appearance in *Satellite Science Fiction*, remains a disappointingly thin effort. Budrys writes here, as always, with care and integrity, which makes the failure of this book all the more regrettable.

His story is that of Allen Sibley, a mousy and contemptible financier who, when trapped in an illegal stock exchange maneuver, accepts an

offer of help from an enigmatic corporation known as Doncaster Industrial Linens. Doncaster, in exchange for Sibley's wealth, alters his body and personality and transforms him into fierce, savage John L. Sullivan. The newly-fledged Sullivan is immediately shanghaied away to the colony on Pluto, where he is assigned to military duty.

The initial situation is a powerful one, and Budrys builds up Sibley's character beautifully—up to the moment of transformation. And at the

close of the book, when the real intent of Doncaster is revealed, Budrys' writing once again becomes vital and deep.

But the essential failure of the book is one of imagination. Pages 49-128—more than half the book—are devoted to an account of Sullivan's uphill struggle with Army life on Pluto. And, sadly, the Pluto that Budrys imagines is very much like 20th-century Earth; and the army he details could well be preparing to fight the Second World War.

In short, there is no vision of tomorrow in this book; Budrys tells us that the action takes place in the year 2197—which is as far removed from today in one direction as the year 1719 is in the other. To set a book two hundred fifty years in the future and to offer 20th-century backgrounds and 20th-century people is to duck the prime imaginative duty of the science-fiction writer, whose job it is to create new worlds for us.

What we have instead is a novel of training-camp life in a contemporary army, told with power and skill—but neither Budrys' superb storytelling nor

insight into character can mitigate the fact that "*Man of Earth*" fails as science fiction. Well-written though it is, the core of the book deals with totally mundane events on a Pluto that might just as well be called New Jersey.

MEN ON THE MOON, edited by Donald A. Wollheim. Ace Books, 35¢. Bound with "*City On The Moon*," by Murray Leinster.

This is the sixth of Donald A. Wollheim's thematic anthologies for Ace—and, though the subject matter may no longer be the property of science-fiction writers in a few years, the five stories he's chosen to show the fictional conquest of the Moon are good ones.

Included are:

"*Operation Pumice*", by Raymond Z. Gallun (from *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, April 1949). A simple and emotionally honest little story of the man who piloted the first Moon Rocket—one of the best of the many on this theme.

"*Jetsam*", by A. Bertram

Chandler (from *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, April 1953). This is a gimmick story with a punch ending—but though the punch failed to connect for this reader, the rest of the yarn is a detailed description of lunar exploration that makes vivid reading.

"*The Reluctant Heroes*", by Frank M. Robinson (from *Galaxy*, January 1951). In many respects, this is the best of the lot—a story of the first settlers on the Moon and their psychological problems, intricately but convincingly plotted and narrowly but successfully missing the stigma of sentimentality at the end.

"*Moonwalk*", by H. B. Fyfe (from *Space Science Fiction*, November 1952). Longest of the five, this is a story of remarkable heroism on the Moon—and in a notable technical achievement Fyfe manages to make the old clichés of heroism fresh and meaningful in this story. A good job.

"*Keyhole*", by Murray Leinster (from *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, December 1951). This is a much-anthologized—and deservedly so—little yarn

which begins with the startling (in this day) premise that there is life on the Moon, and goes on from there in ingenious fashion typical of Leinster at his best.

Leinster at his not-quite-best occupies the other half of this double book. It's his novel "*City On The Moon*", hard-covered by Avalon last year—a semi-juvenile, populated by a set of thoroughly unbelievable cardboard cutouts, but nonetheless worthwhile as the most detailed, realistic treatment of lunar living-conditions to be written in years. In this instance, it's possible to overlook the feeble characters for the sake of the magnificently-detailed background work.

DOOMSDAY MORNING, by C. L. Moore. Doubleday, \$2.95.

Aside from having been the wife of the late and sorely lamented Henry Kuttner, C. L. Moore is a master storyteller in her own right, responsible for such s-f classics as "*Fury*", "*Vintage Season*", and "*No Woman Born*". "*Doomsday*

Morning" is her longest and most ambitious solo work—and as exciting a novel as her memorable "*Fury*" of 1947.

The book takes place in a United States some sixty or seventy years hence—a United States which has been through the hell of a Five Days' War and which has largely been rebuilt, thanks to the efforts of strongman leader Andrew Raleigh—six times President, a national hero whose face is on the coinage, and at the opening of the novel a very old and dying man. Raleigh's method of building was to create an organization known as Comus—Communications U. S.—a hydra-headed organization maintaining tight control over schools, entertainment, and every branch of human communications.

The novel is the first-person account of Howard Rohan, movie-actor turned alcoholic, who is dredged out of obscurity by Comus and given the assignment of leading a troupe of wandering actors through California, which is in rebellion against the organization. What follows is a tense affair

of plot and counterplot, as Rohan hovers ambiguously between Comus and the dogged rebels, giving aid to both but loyalty to neither. The surrounding cast of characters is fully realized and firmly convincing, and two or three scenes in which Rohan and his actors take the stage represent some of the most intensely visualized writing ever seen in a science-fiction work.

Speculative content in "*Doomsday Morning*" is low, and as science fiction little new is offered in this long book. But the two levels of characterization and action are admirably handled. The pace is unrelenting once Miss Moore has her story under way, and the last thirty pages comprise a truly dazzling garrison finish told with awesome power and drive. A first-rate job.

ROBOTS AND CHANGE-LINGS, by Lester del Rey. Ballantine Books, 35¢.

Probably few men have served science fiction so well, in so many capacities, as has Lester del Rey. He's distin-

guished himself as an editor, an agent, a critic, and, above all, as a writer—of teenage s-f, of a gripping adult novel ("Nerves"), and many dozens of fine short stories and novels.

This collection, long overdue, is the first del Rey omnibus from a major house. It includes eleven stories from such sources as *Astounding*, *Unknown*, *F&SF*, *Argosy*, and others, ranging in time from a 1939 item to one published last year. In a sense, all the stories are similar: each bears the del Rey characteristics of detailed development and superb workmanship. Aside from that, it's hard to find two yarns alike in the book. On hand are pure and wild fantasies; a moving ghost story; several suspense yarns; half a dozen straight s-f items; and one ("Keepers of the House") that seems to defy pigeonholing. Each story has its own special appeal and each will have its partisans, but all show the long-familiar del Rey touch.

No literary pyrotechnics here, no arty clever-clever plot dazzlements, no furious sword-

play. Just a top-drawer storyteller at work, in what will be one of the best story collections of 1958.

CHILDREN OF THE ATOM, by Wilmar H. Shiras. Avon, 35¢.

This is a reprint of the 1953 Gnome Press hardcover, which consisted of three novelets from *Astounding* 1948-50 plus two original novelets to complete the book. All five concern the doings of a group of mutant children, born in 1959, shortly after the blowup of an atomics plant—superchildren whose intellectual attainments are far in advance of their chronological age.

The theme is that of Stapledon's "Odd John"—the banding-together of the scattered superchildren—and there's little in the Shiras book that was not developed with greater power, depth, and meaning in the Stapledon classic. But "Children of the Atom" differs from its predecessor in its essentially cheerful approach, contrasting with Stapledon's pessimism.

The cheerful approach also

makes for some fairly dull reading. The first of the five novelets, the superb "In Hiding", and the fifth, which shows the super-children threatened and which details the education of an emotionally cramped mutant, have life and vigor. But the three intervening stories lack conflict and narrative drive, and their intellectual interest and psychological warmth and insight are not always sufficient to carry them along. Still, at the price, the book is a bargain for anyone willing to forgive the slow pace of the middle. The first and fifth stories have enough meat to make the trip worthwhile.

Sadly, this is another of those not-the-end-but-the-beginning books. To quote the final sentence:

"'That was a false start,' Tim replied. 'This is the real beginning.'" ! ! ! !

THREE TIMES INFINITY, Edited by Leo Margulies. Gold Medal, 35¢.

The accent is on robust action in this collection of three short novels. Leading off the book is "Lorelei of the Red

Mist," by Leigh Brackett and Ray Bradbury—a moody, colorful, slightly frantic novella of action and adventure taken from *Planet Stories* vintage 1946; fine for nostalgia-sufferers and others who, like me, mourn the passing of the heroic school of s-f.

Following Brackett-Bradbury comes Theodore Sturgeon's "The Golden Helix," a strange and frequently beautiful story of an alien world and its Earthborn colonists, notable for some striking imaginative work of the kind Sturgeon is famed for. Ted indulges in what seems like excessive coyness here and there, but the yarn is compelling nonetheless. The original publication was in *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, 1954.

And finally comes Robert A. Heinlein's own story version of his movie *Destination Moon*. Like every story that appears under the Heinlein byline, this is a superb job of storytelling, quietly realistic in every detail. It has appeared previously only in the old *Short Stories* magazine, issue of September 1950.

CADUCEUS WILD

Last
of
Four
Parts



by Ward Moore & Robert Bradford

Like many revolutionary groups in the past, the Mallie Underground believed that freedom for the individual could only come when everyone was free. The subtle tyranny they opposed, the Medarchy, was concealed behind its sincerely-believed protest that it prescribed for the people's good. And there was no point in substituting one form of compulsory treatment for another. But Cyrus, Victoria, and Hank had been betrayed by a fellow Mallie, and the Underground had to decide what should be done to the traitor!

Synopsis

DR. RAPHAEL TREE was neither a mad scientist nor a megalomaniac. "You don't allow children to play with live bombs, or neurotics to indulge delusions. We have seen what happened when they were so allowed. If we had taken over earlier, we would certainly have averted the third world war—and perhaps some of those that went before."

In this day, when the medarchy was supreme, such a statement almost sounded believable. CYRUS TARN could not deny that certain benefits had come from the rule of caduceus, where every citizen had to report to his doctor for a health check-up regularly, and where the doctors' decisions were the law. People weren't oppressed in the old-fashioned way; they had freedom of speech, of the press, of vote on political matters, and of worship—except where these infringed on public health. What constituted public health was, of course, determined by Ama.

TARN (born Tennick) sat at the table with Dr. Tree and CHRIS MALLUP, who worked for Tree, drinking whiskey and wondered how much they knew or suspected about him and about his companions. Ten-year-old HEN-

RY CARLING was being passed off as Tarn's grandson; the boy's sister, VICTORIA CARLING, was still supposed to be his sister—only her name was now Carrie Goodspeed.

"Man brings suffering on himself," stated Dr. Tree. "He insists on it, cherishes it, refuses to be parted from it. And the only thing he learns is that suffering never gets him anything but suffering. We've given the people the utopia so long dreamed-of: health, happiness, security, freedom from war. Some of them still aren't satisfied. The ones who would never be satisfied."

He was referring, of course, to the "mallies"—the "mal-adjusted", those who refused to adjust themselves to the sane and sanitary regimen of the medarchy. Cyrus, Victoria, and Henry were all members of that ubiquitous minority—which could do little more than rebel, and try to convince the majority that the rule of caduceus wild robbed man of all dignity. They believed that denying a man the right to make a mistake, even a harmful one, made him less than a man.

Henry had just escaped from a medarchy raid on the mallie school with which he was connected. The boy had been kidnapped and brought

to a hospital. Before he could be given treatment—drugs which would make it impossible for him to conceal anything he knew about the mallies—Cyrus had rescued him and, prepared with forged charts set out for Mallups', where they would have refuge until a plane would take them out of the country. Victoria had gone on ahead, and was waiting for them. Their local "doctor", to whom they would refer, was ALEX CALLIGGS, a member of the underground. He was supposed to bring them new charts before they left Mallups', to go to their rendezvous with the escape plane.

If they were caught, it would be the end for all three of them. Not a firing squad, or any other sort of execution chamber, no overt torture. Just treatment—electrotranquilization and whatever else the medarchy's wisdom might prescribe for their maladjusted states. No marriage between Cyrus Tarn, age fifty, and Victoria Rald, age twenty-nine, slightly crippled, could possibly be approved. They would be treated and—what happened to the flame when the candle was blown out? Urgency and emotion would be part of an unremembered past, blotted out, destroyed, non-existent.

They'd never recognize each other afterward. For Henry, the process would be less drastic, but the result would be the same. And before it was over, the medarchy would know everything each one of them knew or suspected about the mallie underground.

Mallup was an eccentric, who put up a show of outward conformity, thumbed his nose at the medarchy in private, and did pretty much as he pleased—and got away with it. He had a private library of books prohibited by Ama, most of them quack literature; but he never tried to get anyone else to read them, he said, didn't sell them—and didn't agree with most of the stuff in them himself. He just liked to have them, that was all. It was a position, Cyrus thought, which made Chris Mallup ideal for a medarchy counter-mallie agent. And something was definitely wrong; there was a traitor—at least one—in the underground. First the school had been raided; then the promised new charts for the three fugitives hadn't come through. Perhaps a change of decision, Dr. Calliggs suggested, when Cyrus telephoned him.

Yes, Alex Calliggs might be a traitor. Or Mallup. Dr. Tree might be learning im-

portant things through his protection and friendship with the old eccentric. And he mustn't forget JUDY LARCH, Mallup's sixteen-year-old granddaughter, fanatic in her support of the caduceans, unswerving in her faith in anything the doctors said. She was upset by the grandfather's flouting of health regulations, was certain that he ought to be in a home for the aged. There could be no doubt that if Judy suspected, she wouldn't hesitate a moment to turn Cyrus and the others in. She'd probably get in touch with the medarchy lieutenant at the station—who had given Cyrus and Henry cursory examinations, and looked over their charts. Traveling without a chart meant immediate and thorough examination in the nearest hospital.

Victoria had been upset over what had appeared to be Cyrus' undue attention to this ripe, pretty sixteen-year-old, and Tarn was worried. Such extreme jealousy on so little grounds was unlike Victoria. She was waiting for him upstairs, now.

At length, Dr. Tree finished his whiskey sampling and said goodnight—not an evil man, which was the worst of it, Tarn thought. Few, if any, of them were malicious

—they believed they were doing good, bringing health, happiness, and security to all. But one thing Tree had said stuck in Cyrus' mind. An ex-wife of the doctor's was personal physician to Horace Whitelands, editor of the all-important *Medical Journal*. DR. GRACE TAVISTOCK was an extremist, a member of the small faction in the medarchy which believed in immediate and thorough measures in dealing out the mallies. Whitelands must be warned before their suspicion that he was too liberal—favoring a moderate, gradual course against the maladjusted—exposed that fact that he was loosely connected with the underground, too.

Victoria was feeling better, though still upset. Then, in the night, something awoke Cyrus. Had someone entered the next room? Had Mallup come upstairs? He had thought that Mallup was listening in on them before. He awoke Victoria, who at once awoke the boy; all three began to dress quietly. The door opened, to reveal at least three men behind the one in the doorway who was holding them in the glare of his flashlight. "There's no good in moving—we're prepared to use gas if we have to. Come with us."

"Are you orderlies?" Vic-

toria asked as she shoved Cyrus toward the window. Tarn managed to take them by surprise, as they obviously did not realize that the three were fully awake, or would dare to resist. Victoria and Henry got safely out the window. Cyrus was not so lucky—the impact of landing was on his knee.

"Cyrus!"

He tried to get up, and almost collapsed. Knee—sprained or broken? He tried to be sure of the direction of her whispered voice. He had to know; separation now would be separation forever.

Yet...escape seemed futile. He was crippled, and Victoria lame; what chance had they against the ruthless efficiency of the subcutes? Cyrus thought that, after all, they should separate, and meet at the landing field—in fact, he could see no other course but to let himself be captured while Victoria and the boy escaped. But Victoria would not hear of separation; and it was fairly apparent that she knew what he had in mind. "I'm pregnant", she told him.

That put a different light on everything; they had to stick together now. And the chase showed that the subcutes were not infallible; even with a searchlight, they did not spot the fugitives,

who finally made their way to Dr. Calliggs' cabin.

Who was the informer? Who had put the subcutes on to the fact that three important mallies were at Mallups' place? Had Dr. Tree suspected? Was it old Chris himself, or his fanatically loyal granddaughter? Or—worse still—was there a traitor in the mallie underground?

Alex Calliggs himself was not entirely above suspicion—yet, what could be his motive? He had a definite grievance against the medarchy, and admitted that he was with the mallies because of it, rather than due to any particular sympathy with most of them. "I don't like it," Alex said fretfully. "I don't like being tied in with nuts or fanatics. Some chiropractor or religious maniac is likely to buckle and spill his guts."

"You don't usually find subversives among the calm and reasonable."

"Don't get huffy—I wasn't talking about ordinary neurotics, or even psychoes. I can work with you and Vicky, but what about Rald and some of the others? How can I feel easy with my safety—my practice..."

Alex was nervous, and his binding of Cyrus' knee was tight and uncomfortable. He

did, however, manage to find some sort of clothing for them, and food and water; and he took them in his car to the point where Cyrus decided to make for the woods and hike it. They hadn't told Alex exactly where the landing field was and Calliggs' curiosity on this score didn't increase Cyrus' confidence in the younger man. Still...he had helped.

They followed a stream, discovered that men with rifles were on their trail, and came at last to a road, which rounded an unexpected curve where they saw a station wagon blocked by a fallen tree. It was too late to duck back; a woman got out swiftly, a rifle in her hands, and forced them to move the tree, then to get into the car and drive to her house.

"Do you always greet strangers like this?" asked Victoria.

"When I think they may be useful. Particularly if they happen to be three notorious mallies whose description I've just heard on the radio."

The woman was Dr. Tavistock—whom Cyrus suddenly remembered as an ex-wife of Dr. Raphael Tree. Tree had said that "Grace" was in sympathy with the extreme faction in the medarchy—the faction which wanted to ex-

terminate all mallies without any further nonsense, as quickly as they could be tracked down. Yet, Dr. Tavistock told the fugitives, she could help them—there was something she wanted done, and she would make a deal. She'd give them all new charts, let them go, and not report them to the subcutes.

All she wanted them to do was to kill someone.

It was while Cyrus was arguing, that a car drove up, and voices outside demanded entrance. Dr. Tavistock told Hank to get into a closet, then said to Victoria, "Get out two smocks, caps, masks. Put one set on. Now you," she turned to Cyrus. "If these are subcutes, I'll turn you over unless you do as I say. Take off your shirt and get on that table."

When the subcutes entered, Dr. Tavistock was apparently performing an operation; she refused to answer any questions, and ordered the intruders out. Finally, she let them see the chart of the "patient"—they were suspicious at the fact that there was only one nurse in attendance, and that the "patient's" chest had not been shaved for a "cardiac operation". The leader of the squad looked at the chart, then said, "Oh... Now I understand the absence of addi-

tional witnesses. You have a terrible responsibility."

That seemed to satisfy the subcutes; they left, and Dr. Tavistock did a competent job of dressing Cyrus' knee, observing that the earlier bandaging had been somewhat inept. Finally, Cyrus asked who she wanted killed.

"Whitelands."

Horace Whitelands! Whitelands of the *Medical Journal*, and assistant to the head of the medarchy, Dudley Higginson.

"Well," Cyrus said, "at least you're not asking me to go after Higginson himself."

"No—that wouldn't be necessary. That subcute was anxious to know the name of the patient you impersonated. I terminated the Personal Physician on this operating table yesterday afternoon."

The assassination of Higginson, it turned out, was a spur-of-the-moment project on the part of Dr. Tavistock. "He was my patient," she said, "suffering from a malignant growth on his lung. Had it become known, the Mercifuls would have made every effort to get him."

Cyrus bargained a little while longer, then agreed. But what were they going to do about the subcutes outside? Dr. Tavistock would serve them doped coffee, she

said, and told Cyrus to let them in. But it was clear that she was not an experienced conspirator; she hadn't even considered the possibility of her conversation with the fugitives being overheard. Thus, she was taken completely by surprise when the subcute entered with gun drawn. It was only combined action that overcame the man. Then she gave him a shot from a hypodermic.

An empty hypodermic. There was now another body to dispose of.

The subcutes had to be put off the track. Cyrus would make a break for it, and Dr. Tavistock would put the subcutes on his trail, Victoria said. They didn't use dogs; they had electronic spoor-detectors. "Swing around through the woods down to the road. As soon as you have a good start, she can tell them that Hartney is after you and wants them to follow right away. The counter will pick up your trail. Then we'll put Hartney's body in the station wagon and meet you. That will save her from anything worse than suspicion, and get us out of here."

It worked, though not as Dr. Tavistock had planned. She'd intended to leave Victoria and Hank behind but was careless and left the rifle lying on the ground when

they put the dead subcute's body in the car. Now Victoria had the rifle.

A sheriff's car approached, and Cyrus reminded Dr. Tavistock that, should she get the notion to hail the police, "I'd point out where your puncture entered. That would dispose of a heart-failure story."

The trio had the upper hand for the moment. They made Dr. Tavistock let them out at a point Cyrus recognized, and drive on while they plunged into the woods again, finally making their way down to a beach. If Cyrus was right, they were now less than three miles from the airfield, where the plane was supposed to pick them up.

Then they discovered a helicopter, obviously seeking them. They climbed the rocky declivity, up to the grassy plateau again.

Disaster came suddenly. Hank, who had grown impatient of their slow progress and run ahead, inadvertantly emerged into the open. They heard a woman's voice exclaim pleasantly, "Why, hello, my dear. What brings you out here?"

The three seemed to be picnickers: a woman, sweet-faced and whitehaired; a girl no older than Victoria; and a man with wide shoulders, powerful. But the man seized

the rifle from Victoria, saying that the season was closed for hunting, and it was cruel to kill animals. Then the older woman exclaimed, "Why the poor man is limping. You must be in pain!" And later, when she noticed Victoria walk, "You are limping too, dear. How awful!"

AT FIRST, the old woman and the man seemed to be eccentrics, but the tone of their conversation showed that they were more than that—they were Mercifuls. The girl, Edith, shrank from "helping" the fugitives. "They're mallies," she said. "They cling to pain."

The man, Edward, sighed. "They don't understand. They have no idea what it means to devote your life to eliminating pain. We discipline ourselves. We don't drink: it might cloud our judgement. We don't smoke: it might dull our senses. We don't dance or go to entertainments: there is no place in our lives for frivolity. We are vegetarians, we mortify the flesh, we risk our lives constantly to help others. And what is our reward? Misunderstanding, hatred, slander. We're hunted by subcuties and orderlies—we're subjected to shock treatments, lobotomies or psychotherapy if we're caught."

And they would "help" the three—two cripples, and a boy who would only know the horrors of an orphan asylum afterwards, if they didn't help him. Then Cyrus heard a motor, and warned them that the subcutes were near.

"There's still time," the mother said. "Hurry, Edward". The "help" would come by way of poisoned darts—swift and painless. In the uncertainty, Cyrus finally got the rifle, and scattered the embers of their fire over the dried grass; then he trained the rifle on the Mercifuls and told them to go.

The fire was spreading, and the subcutes would be drawing closer. The woman was shocked at the thought that Cyrus might shoot her. "But I'm not in pain," she protested. "You have no reason..."

The man and the girl hesitated no longer; they left then the old woman followed her son, calling brokenly. "Oh Edward, come back and do your duty."

THE FIRE would block the subcutes—but not the helicopter which was hovering ominously almost overhead. Finally it landed, a few yards from them.

"Get behind me," Cyrus commanded. He would order the occupants back in.

Only it wasn't the subcutes;

it was Dr. Yester, and Alex Calliggs was with him. Hesitantly, and making sure that no one except the two were in the copter, Cyrus consented to go with them to the mallie hideout, where an important meeting of the underground would take place. Was it a trap? He suspected that they'd be flown to the subcutes, instead; but when they landed, even as he swung the rifle to cover the men approaching them, he recognized John Rald and old Hammerfield. These two were above suspicion if such a thing were possible at all.

Cyrus and Hank related the barest outline of what had happened, and Hammerfield said to save the details for later; everyone else would want to know, and there was no point in going over it twice.

"Who's everyone?" Cyrus demanded, suspicious again.

"All the delegated nuts from Northern California," John Rald informed him cheerfully. "Two good sisters from the Ursuline Convent. Two osteopaths, a chiropractor—at least he was there the last time I looked—and a fine assortment of poor misguided heretics, not to mention a young man who has discovered a loophole in the second law of thermodynamics, and a young woman who is con-

vinced that her future lies in bed. Any bed."

Feeling increasingly sheepish about having a firearm in a world suddenly returned to the normal pattern of talking about the horrors of Amarytyn, Cyrus felt as though the gun had swollen to many times its normal size. Still, somewhere in the heterogeneous opposition, someone had relayed information to the orderlies. He grasped the rifle again.

THE RANCHOUSE was kin to Dr. Tavistock's except that fussy touches had been added: false shutters, scalloped boards pretending to be valences, concrete ducks in a touching if stony family group. Six or seven Pekinese dogs ran at them, yapping and snuffling. It was all understandable, as soon as it was realized their hostess was Mrs. Guinivere Queedly—a lady of some wealth, devoted both to Christian Science and the breeding of this particular variety of pet. She came forward now, completely authentic, to the black velvet band around her neck and the prismatically flashing rings which overemphasized the swollen veins on her hands. "So

good of you to come," she murmured.

"So good *for* them, too," amended John Rald. "Lots better than the psycho ward."

"Nothing can hurt the children of Love—error will not touch them, even there."

"Bet it comes darn close, though," muttered Hank. Cyrus, finally abashed, stood the rifle under a corner whatnot loaded with china figurines, hoping that no one would notice it.

Hammerfield spoke mildly. "I think we ought to begin right away, and get through as soon as possible. We have business which will take some hours, anyway—many of us have come a long way. Any large gathering is dangerous. It would be disaster if the subcuties rounded up such a whopping bunch of mallies."

A man bluntfaced, bluntfingered, white-toothed, tapped him on the biceps. "I object to that term, sir. It is a vulgar abbreviation for maladjusted person. I particularly object to it applied to myself or my patients. We are adjusted, sir, in every way—perfect form means perfect function."

HAMMERFIELD pushed his spectacles up on his forehead. "Forgive me, Doctor. I was not thinking of adjust in the osteopathic sense..."

"There is no other, Sir. There can be no other. Adjustment means adjustment—mal-adjustment, maladjustment. Misuse of these words is part of the intolerable conspiracy of the MDs to drive people deeper into ignorance and ill-health so they will become more certain victims to their drugs and poisons, unnatural and ineffective."

"Odd to hear you say that, Doctor." A youngish man in a loud sport jacket thrust himself between the lay analyst and the osteopath. "Very odd. Where Chiropractic depends on manipulation and natural diet, osteopathy..."

"Gentlemen—please! We have important business. Let's get on with it. Can we select a chairman?"

"What for? No chairman, no straight-jacketing rules, no elections, no ayes or nays. Let everybody speak freely," roared Mendenall.

"My comrade, an unphilosophical anarchist," explained

Rald. "God love you, brother, for your militant spirit. *You* don't need rules, any more than you need a cop to make you good, or a doctor to make you healthy. But *we* have to be tolerant of these poor people who think they have to have such crutches. Bear with them, brother. Love them, God bless them."

Mendenall bit his thick black mustache—defiant mark of his challenge to the medarchy—uncertainly. Cyrus allowed himself to realize for the first time that the flight of the last eighteen hours was over—or at worst transferred to a more accustomed plane, where safety was not unobtainable, not unthinkable. Hammerfield took advantage of the lull to engineer his own election to the chair. Polishing his spectacles, he began, "Someone in this organization..."

"I protest," cried Mendenall. "I recognize no organization. No laws, no rules, no..."

JOHAN RALD put his arm over the other's shoulders. "How right you are. I don't recognize organizations or any

such unChristian tools of force either. . . ."

"I'm an atheist," growled Mendenall.

"Are you now?" asked Rald, giving him a hug. "God bless you—I'll pray daily for your conversion. Once in my pride I called myself an agnostic. I knew no better. Well, brother, you and I don't recognize these tools of force, but does it do *us* any harm if these good people use words like 'organization' when they mean 'a free association' . . ."

"Kropotkin. . ."

"Exactly, brother, exactly. Kropotkin and Emma Goldmann and Blessed Dorothy Day. . ."

The two nuns, sitting demurely together, looking brightly out from under their cowls, crossed themselves.

" . . . would all have tolerated such a political, not to say theological, error. Forgive them, brother, and let's get on with it."

" . . . someone in this loose association of opponents of the Ama is a stool pigeon."

The dead silence hung expectantly. Everyone in the room looked furtively at his

neighbor, then quickly down. Someone coughed; stifled it.

"The son of a bitch! I'll cut his throat myself," vowed Mendenall. The shocked murmur seemed to come as a relief.

HAMMERFIELD went on, as though he were dealing with something utterly commonplace. "Three members—three of our number who were hiding from the Medical Police. . ."

"Why?" asked an unidentified voice. "Why should they hide? Why didn't they go gladly to their doom, witnesses for truth?"

"I don't know," answered Hammerfield. "Probably didn't want to. Anyway, their hiding place was betrayed to the subcuties. This could only have been done by one of us."

But that's not so, thought Cyrus. *Judy, Mallup, Tree.* What was the matter with Hammerfield? Had he got the story garbled? True, everything pointed to Yester, but the other three were possible suspects. Should he say something now? Or wait till later?

"I warned you a long time ago not to let doctors in," the

faith-healer, Aloysius Clonter said in a strong, singing voice. "Men without faith are bound to be faithless."

"I assume you mean MDs," one of the osteopaths said, "and I agree with you..."

"I mean all who think healing is man-made and not spiritually achieved..."

CYRUS PUSHED his way past the speaker, seeking Victoria. "The wrangle is on, and Hammerfield seems to have got everything askew. No wonder we never get anywhere. Where's Hank?"

"Fed and bedded down. What did you expect? Regimented storm-troopers?"

"But this is chaos."

"The Ama has order. Everything is neat and prescribed. Is that what you want?"

"Right now I want sleep."

"Poor darling. It'll be hours till you get any."

"Why should I stay awake and listen to this stuff?"

"Because, my dear, this is the only way Patients will ever achieve impatience. Revolution by formula and discipline means counter-revolution by another formula and better dis-

cipline. The only permanent revolution is that made in the heart."

"Just being in the same room with John Rald makes you talk like him. I'm jealous."

She patted his cheek. "And me with a fondness for older men, too. So you better hurry them along before I elope with John."

"Hurry them along—try and speed up a glacier."

ALEX, WHO had been trying to say something for a long time, now shouted, "All of you who are so busily chirping that doctors are untrustworthy allies don't take time to understand that we have something to lose. You haven't—you're all playing, while we..."

"Don't do us any favors," snarled Mendenall. "We're not Patients."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Hammerfield. "This is a deadly serious business. Instead of complaining about each other, we ought to be trying to find out who this individual is."

"I hope we won't overlook the possibility that one of the

three victims may have been forced to inform against himself," put in Yester.

Cyrus felt his annoyance mounting. "If you really suspect me of turning myself in, just so you could practice on a copter, I'm willing to take a shot of parapentothal and be questioned. Providing you take one yourself," he added.

"Good deal. It just happens, as they say, that I have some with me. Also a hypo. But why just you and me? Vicky and Hank are suspects, too. They ought to be in on this."

"Hank's asleep."

"We'll leave him to the last, then. How about Vicky?"

"I'm ready when you are."

"Good girl. And since the medical profession has been blanketly impugned, it'll be only fair to bring Dr. Calliggs in on the deal."

"There will be no medicines given or taken in my house. I will not be a party to the spread of error."

"But Mrs. Oueedly, this is a vital matter," argued Cyrus. "Aside from the question of whether an injection of parapentothal can be called taking medicine, we're faced with the

fact that we can't keep on functioning if the Ama knows as much about us as we do ourselves. For our protection, we must find the source of the leak."

A SLIM GIRL, who had been sitting in an upholstered chair much too large for her, asked, "Why? Why should we hide and conspire and be secret? Why not let the Ama know everything? Our weapons are moral weapons, our force is not in numbers but ideas..."

"You religious fanatics are all alike," complained Mendenall. "Scratch the surface and you turn out to be nothing but counter-revolutionary scabs."

"The record of Jehovah's Witnesses speaks for itself," the girl said proudly, without raising her voice or moving from her chair. "Christendom has persecuted us, but we have not flinched before the cells of the federal penitentiaries, Hitler's gas chambers, Soviet slave camps, or the operating tables of the medarchy."

"What good does your martyrdom do? What good are your moral weapons? What we need is a few thousand—or

even a few hundred—resolute people to knock off the medical bigshots. This is a class struggle. Religious nuts and the idle rich—" he made a sweeping gesture, indicating, not Mrs. Queedly's taste, but her ability to exercise it "—always wind up on the wrong side of the barricades because they're from the right side of the tracks."

"Barricades went out when machine-guns came in, and tracks are not the demarcation line they once were," commented a middle-aged man. Cyrus had the impression that he was an optometrist.

"I'm speaking metaphorically," said Mendenall.

"Brother," John Rald assured him, "you're right about God being on the side of the poor. . . ."

"I said no such thing. There is no God."

THE NUNS crossed themselves again and began fingering their rosaries.

"God love you—if you want to call Him Historical Materialism, I doubt if He will mind. He has so many names. You're right about His being on the

side of the poor and oppressed, but brother, what other weapons dare the poor use? The Ama employs force. If we compete with them, how are we different from them?"

"They use force to make us do things," said Hissip, the vegetarian. "If *we* used force—I'm not advocating it, I'm just trying to clarify—it would be to avoid being compelled to do things against our conscience."

"As of now," said Rald. "But are you sure that eventually you wouldn't use force to compel people not to kill animals? Or to stop taking aspirin? Or booze? Brother, means and ends can't be put in different boxes."

"There's no use asking any of you to address yourselves to the chair," said Hammerfield wearily.

"I'd like to know if there's general agreement that we don't care how many informers we have here, or whether the Ama gets our names, descriptions, and addresses first thing tomorrow," said Cyrus. "I should think you'd be interested too, Mrs. Queedly."

"They can't do anything to me. Thanks to Mrs. Eddy's

teachings, I know that the flesh is unreal and so-called diseases are illusion."

"I agree we must find out who the stoolie is," cried Rald. "Not to preserve our skins, but to save his immortal soul, which he has imperiled by pride and avarice."

THE SECOND osteopath rubbed a loose-skinned hand over his bald head. "I don't know why the idea of self-preservation should be disgraceful. I've heard a lot about liberty, and moral weapons, but surely the one thing on which we all ought to be agreed—the one thing that brought us together originally, and ought to hold us together now—is the desire to protect ourselves against the Ama."

"Quite right, Doctor," agreed the chiropractor. "It seems to me we have allowed ourselves to be divided into two factions: those who are concerned with practical matters, and those who are more interested in philosophy. I think we ought to keep our feet on the ground at all times and avoid ideological arguments."

"Two factions, hell!" Alex

burst out. "I don't know how many there are in this room, but there are probably that many factions. None of you can agree on anything. No wonder the Ama has everything its own way. The marvel is that you *all* haven't been picked up and treated."

"Some of us have," Mendenall informed him grimly. "Shock therapy and carbon dioxide and post-hypnotic suggestion doesn't always lead to quiescence."

"Maybe you need something more drastic," said Alex.

Rald shook his head. "If every mallie were perfectly adjusted tomorrow, there would be just as many the day after. God loves difference, brother. That's why no two blades of grass, or grains of sand, are identical."

"I'd like to ask Dr. Calliggs a question." Hammerfield was so astonished at this lapse into parliamentary usage that he nodded speechlessly to Stuart Yester to go ahead. "Was that 'you' plural?"

"What? I don't understand what you mean."

"You said Mr. Mendenall possibly needed more drastic

treatment. Perhaps you'd like to include some of the rest of us in your prescription?"

"Perhaps," snapped Alex.

There was a shocked silence. "Interesting," remarked Yester.

ALEX WAS irritated beyond discretion. "Are you implying that paranoia is desirable, Doctor?"

"I'm not a psychiatrist. I couldn't say with assurance what is paranoic and what is a longing for justice."

"I see," sneered Alex. "Nor tell the difference between trying to reform what is burdensome, and the megalomania which goes to fantastic lengths—like illegal schools for mallies?"

Victoria's voice was frigid with fury. "You disapprove of the schools so many have sacrificed everything for?"

Alex laughed nervously. "Everyone knows about your father fixation. The mallie schools are sacred because Boyd Carling helped start them. It doesn't make any difference to you—because it didn't to him—that these brats are being taught to go to

quacks. Or that they are being unfitted to live in any society except a dream-world. That's the fixation that accounts for why you aren't interested in any man who isn't at least twice your age."

ALEX HAD never concealed his contempt for the mallies, Cyrus Tarn thought, but he had always implied an exemption for Victoria and Cyrus from it. Evidently whatever rebuff Victoria had given him must have rankled deeply. Yet on second thought, was he acting only like a man whose masculine pride had been hurt? Or like someone whose nerves had been strained enough so his self-control had broken? "Alex," Cyrus asked softly, "why did you put such a tight bandage on my knee?"

"I told you. Are you questioning my competence?"

"I wonder if your disgust for mallies couldn't have influenced you to make it tighter than necessary."

"You see? Delusions of persecution. Every doctor is automatically an enemy, even when he's doing everything to help."

"But the bandage was too

tight," insisted Cyrus. "It slowed me up."

"You got away, didn't you?"

"Yes... Thanks to luck. I wonder..."

"What I wonder," said Victoria, "is why you were gone so long just when we were ready to leave your place?"

"I told you. Old Cramson..."

"It was Blunteagle the first time."

"Slip of the tongue. Are you going to keep on asking pointless questions?"

"A pointed one is, why did you look so startled when we arrived? And why were you so disturbed at the spot we picked to leave you?"

"Why does an obviously secure middle-aged man go around seducing young girls to reassure himself, and why do they compensate for physical handicaps by letting themselves be seduced?"

"Maybe they like it," said Yester. "Anyway, how did the subcutes know Vicky was at Galentry? And how did they get on the trail so fast after you drove them out of Secarros?"

"That's right. Even with

their electronic sniffer they would have found some difficulty in locating our trail so quickly..."

"If someone who knew where we'd gotten out of the car hadn't told them the approximate location," finished Victoria.

"Doctor Calliggs..."

ALEX'S BLOW sent Yester sprawling against Mrs. Queedly, who stepped back in alarm, allowing him to fall to the floor. An elbow in Hammerfield's padded ribs pushed him aside, and a kick aimed at the younger osteopath forced a hasty retreat. Only a pale little man, a theosophist, stood between Alex and the front door. Cyrus and Hissip started forward at the same time. They found themselves facing a revolver in Alex's hand.

"Stay where you are," panted Alex. "I won't hesitate, and there won't be any consequences if I plug a few of you. I joined you in good faith because I thought you really meant to do something about the Ama's interference in everybody's business, but I soon found you didn't care about

anything except your own eternal jabber. There's not one of you who wouldn't be better off under restraint until you're cured or euthanized. And the most dangerous phychos here are people like Tennick, whose symptoms are so deep they don't show on the surface, or Yester, who sells out his own profession."

The girl from the big chair slid down and glided unobtrusively forward. In a moment she stood between the others and Alex—so close that the gun was not a yard from her chest. "I don't think you want to shoot," she said calmly. "But if you must I'm not afraid of temporary death. Because we can't let you go on like this."

Alex retreated half a step. "I'm not fooling, sister. If you think I wouldn't shoot a woman, you don't know how many of them I've seen trussed up like chickens ready for the oven, waiting for surgery."

JOHAN RALD walked slowly up to the girl. "Bless you, my dear, you were fine. Now then, Doc, let me have that gun."

Alex laughed harshly. "You

old fool! I'll let you have it—right in the guts. Do you think I wouldn't?"

"Yes. You can't shoot out love, like an electric light. You might be able to pull that trigger if either of us were afraid, but we aren't. So give me the gun, and then we'll talk about the futility of informing."

Victoria's hand covered her mouth; the sisters were on their knees; Hissip had picked up a bulky vase and was circling to get a clear aim. Stuart Yester rose from the floor; Mrs. Queedly's lips moved soundlessly. "Stand back," Alex ordered.

Rald's hand went out. It did not dart. He made no attempt to snatch the gun. His fingers closed around the barrel slowly, without deflecting Alex's aim, which was now for his abdomen. For a moment both men stood face-to-face, each holding onto the revolver, staring into each other's eyes. Then Rald stepped back, the weapon in his sole possession. Everyone in the room exhaled together.

Hissip, still ready with the vase, muttered, "We'll have to get rid of the bastard."

"Let me," volunteered Men-denall. "He's nothing but a dirty scab, and I know what to do with *them*."

Rald held the gun gingerly, as though its touch was contaminating. There was no obvious place to get rid of it; he dropped it, butt first, into his pocket. "Lord love you, brothers, let's not have any of that talk. The poor soul's in trouble enough with his own conscience without our threatening him. Besides, if we offer wrong for wrong, we justify his sellout instead of bringing him to understanding with love."

"Love!" spat Alex. "You hypnotized me, damn you!"

RALD SHOOK his head. Someone called out with authority, "You can't be hypnotized against your will."

Victoria said, "Alex, how could you? Hank's only a child: how could you bring yourself to condemn him to pain and misery?"

Calliggs threw his head up. The dimple in his cheek, the cleft in his chin, no longer gave the impression of amiability; now they were scars, indentations pressed upon unwilling

flesh. "You mallies are always weeping over something or somebody. What's one kid in an overpopulated world? Especially one with all sorts of hereditary predispositions toward psychosis—you ought to be able to observe Boyd Carling's savior complex in yourself. Anyway, I had nothing against any of you—the Ama offered—But that's none of your business. And I let you get a head start, didn't I? I didn't call the cutes in while you were in my place, did I?"

"Instead of wringing your hands in self-pity, why don't you give a thought to other people? I built up a good practice out of nothing by my own skill. I saved lives—thousands of lives—by my technique. Which is more important: that, or the uncovering of a few paranoids who would obviously be better off for treatment?"

"Who are you to judge?" asked John Rald.

"Who are you to weigh *my* judgement? If you haven't got guts enough to kill me—and it doesn't look as if you have—then you've got to deal with me. I don't know what proposition you can make me that's

better than the Ama's—but if you want to try, go ahead."

The osteopath with the square hands said slowly, "I'm not an MD, and I don't believe in euthanasia, but I'm willing to make an exception in your case, Sir. It will be practically painless, just a little-pressure in the right places..."

Mrs. Queedly shrieked. Cyrus heard the quiet voices of the nuns, "...*now and at the hour of our death...*" He calculated rapidly: Mendenall, Hissip, the osteopath who had just spoken, probably his colleague, and the chiropractor—five almost certain votes for death. Against that, Rald, Mrs. Queedly, the sisters: four. Hammerfield and Stuart Yester might agree with the majority; he had no idea what stand the Jehovah's Witness girl would take, and he was not too sure of the faith-healer or the theosophist. It would be a close thing. He and Victoria could have the deciding voice.

X

MENDENALL demanded, "What are we waiting for? Or is

there anybody here stupid enough to try and buy him off?"

"Just a minute," said Yester. He turned to Calliggs. "I don't think we're that stupid. For one thing, there's no guarantee you'd stay bought."

"Even if there were," added the Jehovah's Witness, "we would not bargain with evil."

"Let's not be fanatical," urged the chiropractor. "Perhaps there's some way..."

Whitelands, remembered Cyrus. If Whitelands became Personal Physician, then the heat would be off, and Alex would be harmless. But not immediately; all the present directives, all crystalized policy would remain for...how long? A week? A month, a year? Long enough to endanger Mrs. Queedly; long enough for the subcuties to pick up many of those present, long enough for Victoria to lose her child. And Whitelands was no enemy of the medarchy—merely a protestant against its excesses and rigidity. Even with his sympathies translated into some kind of action, he was only a long-range hope. Nor could he be used for counter-blackmail to

threaten Alex, since White-lands' attitude had to be kept secret if he were to be at all effective.

STUART went on conversationally, "There's another question, Doctor. Are you really in a position to bargain with us at all? The sad story of the great big naughty Ama cracking down on the enterprising surgeon who's only trying to make an honest fortune by perfecting better techniques is quite touching, but you and I know it isn't the whole picture."

"No, it isn't. 'Fortune'! The incompetent and lazy always think what you earn by your own work automatically amounts to a fortune. I stuck to my profession—didn't play politics or become a do-gooder so long as I was left alone. I never had delusions of persecution like most of you general practitioners. You're all eaten up with envy for the man who has brains and initiative to specialize. You mallies aren't fundamentally different from the Ama after all. When things are running smoothly, neither of you can leave them alone."

"Aren't you forgetting something? About the time when you were a do-gooder? When you did that voluntary stretch as house-surgeon at the Fresno Age-Adjustment Center?"

"That was before I'd learned how damned thankless Patients were," muttered Alex.

"But after you'd learned how grateful—in terms of dollars—they were for black market drugs. However, that's another story. The Ama cracked down on you for putting your personal advancement against that of medical knowledge. They'd have cracked down harder if they'd known what we can—and perhaps will—tell them about how you perfected your technique and got your supply of adrenal glands."

"I don't know what you're talking about, you—you paretic."

STUART clucked softly. "Lapses of memory already? Hallucinations? Any signs of schizophrenia? I'm talking about the suddenly-accelerated rate of induced terminations during your stay at the Center. I've some interesting statistics on how many of the

euthanasia orders you signed and carried out yourself. It runs in direct proportion to the amount of transplanted adrenal operations you and your partners performed at the time. I've collected all the proof necessary for the Ama. It's up to you whether they get it or not."

"It's a lie. It's all lies."

"If it is then you have nothing to worry about."

"Threats! Diplomacy!" exclaimed Mendenall disgustedly. "What next? There's nothing to do but get rid of him. I demand a vote."

"Brother!" cried Rald. "Have you forgotten your principles? Voting! Parliamentary procedure! What next, indeed?"

"All right," said Hammerfield. "If you don't want to come to a conclusion by voting, you can arrive at it by divine inspiration for all I care. Only let's make up our minds. What do we want to do with him—turn him loose, let him go on his way?"

"That's too dangerous," the younger osteopath protested.

"If you want to stay clear of danger, this is no place for you," warned the girl. "Let him

go; he can bring harm only to our bodies."

"That's all the medarchy can do," said Victoria. "For one thing, I suppose Stuart has his proof where one of his friends could put his hands on it..."

Yester nodded.

"...so if he telephones now to release this proof any time he doesn't hear from Stuart for twenty-four hours..."

"Sounds OK to me. Use your phone, Mrs. Q?"

CLONTER broke in. "Hold on a minute. I'd think by now you'd have learned not to trust these pill-givers. You've just found out that one of them is a spy, so you're going to put your confidence in the other."

"Brother, for a man who heals by faith, you seem a little short of your own remedy. The real issue..."

"One of the real issues," broke in Hammerfield, "is that we've all taken the risk of coming here on important business. Is he going to stay around to hear it?"

"The real issue," said Rald, "is whether society is numbers or people. If it's numbers, then

it doesn't matter what becomes of us, or Alex, or anyone else. Shoot them, shock them, terminate them, turn them over to the cutes, or threaten them with disgrace. It's all the same—it doesn't mean anything. Number one hundred and ninety-five million is replaced by number one hundred ninety-five million and one—no one ever knows the difference. But if they're people—precious individual souls, equal in the sight of God and loved alike by Him—then we have to accept the responsibility of dealing with people. The danger to our lives, the danger to our safety, the danger to our personalities isn't any greater than the danger to Alex's soul just because there's more of us. Instead of worrying over our own hides we ought to be praying for his conversion."

"Pie in the sky," said Mendell.

"It doesn't sound very practical," said the chiropractor. "I mean—with all respect...well, that wouldn't be of much immediate use, now would it?"

CYRUS SAID, "It seems to me we're all getting away

from what concerns us by searching for security. Even John is looking for security—nothing personal, nothing selfish—through Alex's conversion. And the rest of us want assurance—either through his death or enforced silence—that he won't betray us again. But securities and guarantees are what the medarchy—what any totalitarianism—deals in, and the price is not exorbitant for anyone who really wants them beyond anything else. On the other hand, anyone who wants freedom more than safety has to chance all the dangers of freedom.

"And remember: final solutions are for the Ama, for the believers in the ultimate sanctity of Science. The dogmatists, the unskeptical, the Patients. Our horizons expand—they have to, else we would be prisoners of yesterday's newest marvel, the latest miracle drug, the newest neurological technique—toys for children to play with, illusions to keep the immature marvelling. We have to concern ourselves with reality, with ultimate truths. And ultimate truths have disturbingly many facets.

"The philosophy of the Ama has only one: its subjects must be made and kept physically healthy, intellectually quiet (has anyone written a good book, composed a great quartet, painted an exciting picture, or designed a building adequate for anything more than dental offices under the medarchy?) and socially adjusted. We are here now just because we've rejected those concepts. John is right when he speaks of the value of the individual. I don't think that means we ought to resign ourselves to death or mutilation rather than tamper with it. I don't know. It seems to me we must take some measure of self-defense, short of killing or torturing, but we can't afford to compromise our own dignity in the process.

"I can't go along with John's non-resistance far enough to believe we should suffer without retaliation. Neither can I advocate killing Dr. Calliggs to save ourselves, or imprison him to suit our convenience. I'm willing to let him go on the understanding that he will be exposed if he betrays us further. This means that we have to take the chance he will be fool-

ish enough, or angry enough, to inform, even if it brings disaster on himself."

"You always were a windbag," said Alex. "It's your most obvious symptom. I notice with all the rhetoric thrown around here that while you're too chicken to kill anyone, you think it's fine and moral to steal from them."

MRS. QUEEDLY left her chair. "I don't know how much you expect to lose by not helping the orderlies further, but if the sum isn't too great I think I could get some people to help me raise it. Won't you let me drive you to the bus? We can talk it over."

"Just a minute..." began Mendenall.

"Let them go," said Hammerfield. "We'll never get any nearer a solution."

The evening and the room were warm, but Cyrus shivered. The lack of sleep, the terrors of the day—everything that had happened since the knock on the bedroom door—culminated in this moment of drunken exhaustion. He staggered to a place on the couch and put

his head back. Alex, the Ama's bitter enemy the logical...

Mallup. As between Mallup and the mallies, the old man seemed to have the best of it. For the moment, under the circumstances, noting the contrasts. On the other hand, with all the cross-purposes and confusions—the last ironical note, unintentionally introduced by Mrs. Queedly—they were not resigning. No, yet... He dozed, jerked awake when the weight of his body cramped his arm, turned over, and slept.

He dreamed he was hauled, pinioned and struggling, before a stern council of elders, all wearing tall hats and the gray Puritan dress with white jabots. "Ten Eyck, renegade Dutchman from Fort Orange, you have had carnal connection with one Mistress V—V—V..." The elders all snickered lewdly without relaxing their straight lips; the reader held up two fingers spread wide apart. "We have adjudicated and decided you are not in a state of grace. You are therefore sentenced to the pillory. It's a joke, see: pill-ory. Take your medicine." But when they dragged him out and locked

him in, it was not a pillory but the stocks in which he found himself. Anachronistically he was whistling *Dalla Sua Pace* from *Don Giovanni*. Sir Christopher Wren appeared, saying, "Dr. Guillotine, a friend, will take care of you from now on." He awoke with a stiff neck.

ONE OF THE nuns was speaking in a soft, clear voice. "...naturally we were first concerned with saving a human life and we tried to warn Dr. Higginson his murder had been planned. We may have gotten the message through in time—I pray we have—but I'm terribly afraid we may have been too late. After we did what little we could, it seemed imperative—I suppose you know," she broke off apologetically, "that the Church takes sides neither for or against the medarchy. But many of us, as individual Christians feel that Her teachings, especially those dealing with the sanctity of unborn life, and condemning murder, no matter by whom or with what motive—Oh, dear... where was I?"

"Felt that the teachings of

the Church, Sister," took up her companion, "leave us no choice, as individual Christians, but to oppose the practices of the Healthfare State. For that reason we came to give you this information about the Personal Physician..."

"The Personal Physician is dead," cut in Victoria.

THERE WAS a stir in the room. "How do you know?"

"We were told—under circumstances which rule out doubt—he was legally terminated by the doctor who killed a subcute early this morning. Or was that yesterday morning? The same group plans to assassinate Whitelands, who will probably be his successor."

In the copter they had told Calliggs about Grace Tavistock; he would probably get in touch with her. With the medical tories, Alex would find a comfortable haven; whether they would see enough use in him to accept his adherence was something else.

"Whitelands any worse than Higginson? Anybody know?" inquired the younger osteopath.

"What difference does it

make?" asked Hissip. "These figureheads don't make policy. The Ama remains the Ama."

It would be unwise to say openly that Whitelands was a sympathizer. Besides, the word was subject to so many modifications that in the end it meant little or nothing. "I think we must warn him."

Yester said, "I know something about Whitelands. Moderate man. Used to be a GP himself before they made him editor of the *Journal*. Politician, naturally—they don't make administrators out of practicing physicians — but doesn't go along with the specialist crowd. I don't believe he'd want more stringency in the Ama, maybe less. Wouldn't be surprised if he favored taking back some of the power from the subcutes and the MPs."

"Would he relax the persecution of osteopaths? And other non-medical physicians, of course?"

YESTER declared bluntly, "No MD would do that if he could, and he couldn't if he would. Let's not get the idea that rubbing out the Personal

Physician means the millenium."

"You can't expect revolutions from the top," said Mendenall, recovering eloquence finally. "Upheavals come from below."

"What do you suggest?" asked Hammerfield indulgently.

"Knock them all off. Smash the offices and clinics. Raze the hospitals. Wreck the drug-stores."

"And then?" prodded Hammerfield.

"What do you mean, 'and then'? And then there'll be no more forced examinations, no more compulsory inoculations, no more truth serums, mandatory treatments, involuntary surgery, euthanasia."

"Suppose someone breaks a leg? Or has complications in childbed? Or gets syphilis, tb, or cancer?" asked Cyrus.

"By natural methods and the dominance of the spirit, I can take care of any of these afflictions," asserted Clonter.

"Granting you can," argued Victoria, "you and the osteopaths and the chiropractors..."

Mrs. Queedly, who had re-

turned a few minutes before, sighed. "All unnecessary, all erroneous. A practitioner can remove the false impression of disease."

"Very well. Granting all this, and even assuming you are suddenly multiplied in numbers sufficient to care for everyone including hypochondriacs, my point is simply this: what will the Patients say?"

"Probably, 'Thank God!'" said Hissip.

"Will they?" questioned Cyrus. "Personally, I think they'll lynch you for taking away their security, their father-image, their refuge in time of stress."

JOHN RALD sighed. "Silas, you know the medarchy is evil. It would be wrong to follow the course suggested by our enthusiastic brother. But because it's wrong to kill and pillage doesn't mean it's right to do nothing."

"What do you suggest?" asked Hammerfield.

"A demonstration. The natural confusion and uncertainty coming with the announcement of Higginson's death makes this a good time. Not a

revolution as our friend wants, since revolutions must come from the bottom, as he says. But something to make the average Patient realize he isn't entirely alone and friendless in the hands of the doctors."

"What do you mean by a demonstration?" the Witness wanted to know.

Rald beamed on her. "I mean, my dear, good old non-cooperation. Tried and tested civil—in this case, medical—disobedience. Let's get every Patient we know, or who can be reached simply, to defy the doctors. Let them leave their charts at home. Not show up for their shots or appointments. Let them bite the thermometers and spit out the glass. Let them not pay the Credit Bureau, or report any ailment not a life-or-death matter, let them..."

"But that would be condemning thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—of innocent people to torture, perhaps death. In a revolution, it might conceivably be worth it, but you're talking about a demonstration..."

"That's right. In a revolution there would be no holding back

—it would be win or lose. This would be only a show of strength—it would cost nothing to withdraw partially or wholly. Patients should not martyr themselves. If they're taken in for observation, let them give in right then and co-operate. The purpose will have been served."

"Isn't there always an implicit threat of force behind civil disobedience?" asked the theosophist innocently, clearly not expecting the whirlpool of argument which followed.

STUART YESTER came over to Cyrus. "You and Vicky and I have some decisions of our own to make. Let's sneak out to the kitchen. They'll never miss us."

Casual, so casual, thought Cyrus. He didn't doubt that they would agree on the demonstration in the end. Their absence would make no difference one way or the other. Nothing was ever really accomplished in these meetings, no matter how strongly they were labelled "urgent" or "vital". The real work—if any—was done in small, autonomous groups, as the preparation of

the demonstration would be. If these meetings had any positive value it was as vents for differences, and a reassurance that each mallie was not lost in single, hopeless rebellion.

As soon as they were out of the room, Victoria said, "We owe you an apology, Stuart."

He lit a cigaret. "What kind of talk is this? Without some protective suspicion we'd all wind up in a subcute examination room."

"But everything did point to Alex. I don't know why we were too stupid to see it."

"It doesn't seem to come easy to suspect those who brag about their lack of scruples. Honor rooted in dishonor and so on. I mightn't have suspected him myself if I hadn't known *I* didn't turn you in."

"That didn't rule out Dr. Tree, Mallup, Judy."

YESTER frowned. "Not Mallup—only the girl and Tree, who would have no reason to suspect anyone but Cyrus, except by association. The timing, the shot—extremely dangerous mallies, something *they* would not have known—ruled those two out. And Mal-

lup just didn't fit psychologically, from what John Rald said about him. No, of all those who knew where you were, only Alex had the combination of opportunity and motive. Also, I distrust specialists—particularly ultra-specialists."

"Still, he didn't know the airfield—or wasn't it discovered after all? I mean before the subcutes who were following us got there?"

"We warned off the plane on the supposition that it was. Actually, the exact location wasn't an issue. Alex knew it couldn't be too far from Secaros—deduction, topographical knowledge, and copters couldn't help but find it."

"You know," said Victoria irrelevantly, "of all the names you've used, I like Cyrus best. I don't think I'll go back to calling you Silas now." Then she came back to the pertinent. "With the plane out, what happens?"

"Ship, I suppose," said Cyrus. "Sounds tough."

"It won't be easy," admitted Yester. "But not as hard as the day you've just put in. Charts, passports, certificates of inoculation. Thank heaven,

there's money enough floating around in the underground to buy all these things. Only it may take time."

"And time means hiding again," said Victoria. "I can't face it. I want to get out right now. Tonight."

Yester opened his eyes. "If I didn't know you so well Vicky, I'd say you were close to hysterics."

"I am. I'm quite unreasonable, too. I'm ready to remind anyone that my father and I and Cyrus have earned the right to be helped..."

"My dear girl, no one doubts it. What do you think we are? The sort of characters who would neglect or liquidate you the moment your usefulness is over?"

"Talk, talk, talk. I've heard talk all my life. If words and money could make a revolution, the medarchy would have vanished long ago."

"Wait a minute—I'll be right back."

HE DISAPPEARED in the direction of the living room. Cyrus looked at Victoria anxiously, then took her hands in his. "Don't be upset," he

mumbled. "We'll make it all right."

"I suppose we will. And I suppose I'll be calm and controlled again, and ashamed of breaking out. Only right now I want to scream. Loudly. I think I will, too."

Yester returned with John Rald who took one look at Victoria and said, "What you need is something to eat."

"No I don't. I don't ever want to see food again."

Rald opened the door of the immense refrigerator. "Orange juice. Hmm. The rest seems to be all remains of dead animals. Oh, here's a head of lettuce."

"You try the lettuce and orange juice," suggested Yester. "We'll get along as best we can with the dead animals. How about a cold lamb chop, Vicky?"

She shuddered. "Is there a lemon in there?"

Rald investigated. "Yes there is. But it's cut..."

"Give it to me." She sucked on the half lemon, apparently content.

"Now about getting on a boat—it wouldn't be too hard, if you weren't in such a rush."

"What rush?" asked Rald.

"I mean, what more than usual?"

"Vicky says she won't hide out any more. She wants to leave for England tonight."

BOTH HE and Rald looked at her, waiting some word. She went on sucking the lemon. Cyrus said, "Darling, it takes time to..."

She took out the lemon and inquired, "Do you want me to scream?"

John Rald said, "Go ahead, my lamb, if it will make you feel good. Now, look: there's always an English ship or two in the bay. It wouldn't be impossible to smuggle you three on board without papers and such, but it's a matter of making contacts. I know..."

Yester snapped his fingers. "Collitt!"

"What?" asked Cyrus.

"Consul or consul-general or something. Hates the Ama, but— Well, it's a chance. He can say no, but he won't tip off the subcutes. Want to try it?"

"Put not your trust in consuls," warned Rald.

Cyrus looked questioningly at Victoria, who shrugged. "How do we get there?"

"That's the simplest part. Forethought. We have the one means of transportation orderlies will think a long time before questioning: a nice, shiny ambulance."

"I'll go and get Hank," said Victoria, still holding the lemon.

"OK. Good idea to start before the meeting breaks up. No one will miss us."

"I'll take a last listen. Be right back." Cyrus went into the living room.

HAMMERFIELD was saying, "We know our broadcasts and leaflets have been effective. We need new people to carry them on, since some of our workers have become known to the Ama. We particularly need teachers."

"I understand that the schools have been closed since the raid," said the older osteopath. "Perhaps it would be smart not to do anything about them until we know what the new policy of the medarchy is going to be."

"Backside-to," said Hissip. "It's the existence of the schools, the radio, leaflets, the mallies themselves that makes

the policy of the Ama. Where there's no discontent, there are no concessions. If you're going to have schools at all, you've got to have them as big and as good and as frequent as possible."

Yester tapped Cyrus' arm. With more familiarity with Mrs. Queedly's house than would be expected of an MD in the home of a Christian Scientist, he led them out a side door into a multiple garage. "How do you happen to have an ambulance? Or is it part of the standard equipment here?"

"Drove it down from the city on the chance it would come in handy."

"I never rode in an ambulance before," said Hank, sleepily. "Can I sit in front?"

"Sorry—you're going to be the patient."

"Heck! I never get to do anything."

"Put this on, Vicky. It was the only one I could get. White coats for you gents up front. I hope you can drive with that leg."

"This is the second time I've had a nurse's uniform on."

"It's becoming. You can't

see in this light, but I'm leering."

Cyrus tested his knee by reaching for the starter. The motor was powerful, making the big ambulance tremble gently, like an eager horse. "Feels fine so far. If it gives out I'll switch with John."

"Not me. I'll drive nothing more vicious than a bicycle."

The glass partition between the cab and the body of the ambulance could be slid open for conversation. "Don't use the siren or the red light if you can help it," cautioned Yester. "The less attention we call to ourselves the better."

CYRUS DROVE cautiously onto the driveway, past the parked cars, and turned left on the highway. He touched the gas pedal gently; the ambulance sped smoothly on, taking the curves effortlessly. "Can't I sit up now?" asked Hank.

"No, Henry—just lie quietly. Try to sleep. It's at least a two hour drive."

"Si's doing his best to cut it down," observed Yester.

He had no feeling of excessive speed as the road led downward, the curves becom-

ing less sharp with each drop. An occasional car hugged the opposite shoulder respectfully as they went by; twice they turned out to pass vehicles ahead. Some of the tension built up since Secarros began to fade. Without taking his eyes off the road, he turned his head slightly. "John, do you think the whole business is hopeless?"

"Not to hope would be to betray man's nature."

"There are times when I have a sneaking sympathy for Alex's and Mendenall's viewpoint. We do spend most of our time countering each other instead of the medarchy."

Victoria, evidently forgetting her earlier outburst, said, "We have to work with what we have."

"That's right. Revolutions aren't made by men with sets of blueprints."

"What about Lenin?" objected Yester.

"Was that a revolution or a coup d'etat?" asked Rald. "Real revolution is practically always the same in origin: nuts and screwballs get together and find that none of them like the way things are. Dress them up

in short haircuts and tall hats and they're Lollards or Levelers. Put them in kneebreeches, and they're Sons of Liberty on one side of the water, believers in the Rights of Man on the other. Seventy-five years later they're Narodniks, city intellectuals burning with the conviction that salvation comes from the land and the grimy peasants who till it."

CYRUS THOUGHT, *My dream—telepathy? No: the Lollards. Wrong.* "Mrs. Queedly's no Narodnik," he said, heeding a stop sign, then pushing the ambulance uphill and northward.

"No, but the dear girl from Jehovah's Witnesses is right in the line from the Puritans who cut the cross from the Union Jack because they'd have nothing to do with idolatry. If Mendenall had been around at the right time, he'd either have shot at the lobsterbacks on Boston Common, or dumped tea in the harbor. Both, maybe."

"Mrs. Queedly is a dear in her way. I think she would have been one of those ci-devant aristocrats who sided with

the sans-culottes," said Victoria.

"And got it in the neck from their pantless friends," added Yester. "Hey—what am I doing? Come the revolution, *all* doctors will be shot. Especially those who went against the medarchy."

"The shooting's not unavoidable—it's just hard for humans to have enough sense to avoid it. Proto-revolutionaries, like the mallies, are always in love with ideas—all kinds of ideas. They're too busy with them to think about erecting the machinery of suppression even if they had the temperament for it. But after the nuts and screwballs have churned their ideas and ideals, and disseminated them into the air—like spores, likely to light anywhere and keep on growing—they disappear. . . ."

"Which?" asked Yester.

CYRUS HAD slowed the ambulance down the long hill and through Monterey. Finally past a dreary stretch of motels and stores, he resumed normal speed.

"The people who want heavens on earth," said Rald.

"They do disappear. Some of them die young, some live for the rest of their lives on memories, a lot become disillusioned and mean. The practical politicians take over, the people who look at an idea to see whether an idea is going to help the party or not. If it isn't, they try to stamp it out. From stamping out ideas to executing the ones who have them is only a short step. Cromwell turned on the Levellers. Trotsky ordered the Kronstadt sailors shot down. They shape and modify the revolution, replacing one rigidity with another."

"If you feel like that, I'd think you would have quit long ago," commented Cyrus.

"Maybe that's because you've got a bit of the politician in yourself. If you can't put a coin in the slot and get back a nice, tasty result, it isn't worth it. For the love of God, men have to strive after perfection, knowing they aren't going to achieve it."

Opportunism. . . . The charge, coming from Rald, disturbed Cyrus no more than when spoken by Dr. Tavistock. He had never pretended to selfless dedication. Men and women

with absolute purity of motive were too rare to produce the ferment Rald spoke about. Rald himself, certainly; perhaps the girl witness; after that, the progression shaded all the way to the complete self-interest of someone like Alex.

IF NORAH TENNICK had not wanted a child badly enough to defy medical regulations requiring a certificate of desirable heredity, his life might have continued uneventful, unhurried, in one architect's office or another. He had been an adolescent during the War; like most everyone he had been undisturbed by the swift rise of the Ama. It was still hard at times to realize how quickly the medarchy had established its absolute mastery and changed the necessary rules for avoiding the epidemics which followed the atomic devastations into the means of dominating society.

Because contaminated water must be avoided, domestic life had to be overseen to the smallest detail; because radiation sickness might produce monsters, the warped genes must not be passed on. So Norah, for

the obvious good of posterity, had been deprived of her child, and then, because the doctor wasn't accepting any lay opinion about tolerances for antibiotics, of her life. All in the name of keeping society healthy, physically and psychologically. Without Norah's death, he would not have become a rebel; far from being a Rald, a Mendenall, a Hissip, he had not even the impulses of Stuart Yester, or the acceptance of a doctrine like Mrs. Queedly. He was a synthetic revolutionist, a Mallup who had been differently conditioned.

And if he had not turned against the medarchy, changing from Silas Tennick—good enough to get a job but never good enough to get a commission—to the man of many names, the jack of all subversive trades, who could run a mobile transmitter or a mimeograph, if necessary teach the elementary grades in a mallie school, he would never have met Boyd Carling. And then...

THEY PASSED through Gilroy, elongatedly dismal. "Watch it," instructed Yes-

ter. "This is the place where the flycops study all night. If you see a squad car or anything that looks as though it might have orderlies in it, use your siren and step on the gas."

"I have a feeling we've used up all our quota of narrow escapes," said Victoria. "I wouldn't be surprised to go all the way to Alaska without being stopped."

"I would," muttered Cyrus. "Anyway, we're not headed for Alaska. Incidentally—I just happened to think—unless the consul sleeps in his office we won't be able to get hold of him tonight."

"Why not? I'll bet he'll be delighted to have a crew of mallies drop in on him."

Cyrus knew that it was quite irrational to be irritated at Yester's airiness. But he was exhausted, worn out, worried, driving the ambulance with a sore knee, while Stuart sat back there relaxed and chatted lightly. "I meant, how will you know where to find him?"

"Oh that? Nothing to it. Remember about a year or so ago, the Authorized Public Enlightenment Service—the apes—

gave him some rough publicity? Big pictures of his house in Atherton: 'Envoy of Unmedical State Cosy Among Doctors.' Almost as many MDs there as Secarros. And he was too much the bull-headed Briton to notice the jabs."

"You know where the house is?" asked Victoria.

"Near enough—don't let it worry you."

EASY ENOUGH for you—your girl isn't pregnant, thought Cyrus. You aren't fighting to keep awake. Keep awake; that's right. Don't doze, don't drowse. Going too fast. Too neat: see hazards through, fall asleep, wreck—all dead. Fitting. Irony. Only hazards...not yet...through...

"Isn't an embassy, or whatever, considered part of the country it represents?" Victoria wanted to know.

"An embassy, but not whatever," answered Rald. "A consulate's just an office, like any other."

"San Jose bypass ahead," Yester informed him. "Might as well turn on the red light and floorboard it."

"What? Oh. Sure." More

speed. Stay awake. He fumbled with the knobs; the siren's wail came back into him, jarred him back almost to normal awareness. But the ululation soon grew accustomed and eventually narcotic; he nodded forward and jerked back. Stay awake.

Time must be passing. Miles. Still the lights and siren. No one told him to turn them off. Mustn't then. Leave them on. Speed. Hold the wheel. Stay awake...

Yester reached through and tapped him on the shoulder. "Switch them off and slow down. That's it. Now left, and take it easy. Mmm—no. Let me see..."

"Do you know where it is or don't you? Damn it, I don't want to drive a rubberneck bus."

"Easy does it. Try turning right here."

Easy does it turn right, turn left. You never could find a house around here, even if you knew what you were looking for. Wild goose chase. Who chased wild geese? Count the wild geese and fall asleep before you reached a hundred...

"Turn left and go slow.

Yes...almost sure. Mmmm. Whee—I should have been a dowser! That's it, all right."

"Nice," muttered Cyrus, braking, reaching to turn off the ignition.

"Hey, no! Can't stop here. Go ahead a couple of blocks and park. This thing's as conspicuous as a lighthouse in a fog."

Fog, thought Cyrus. Fog—to be sure. Fog: London Particular. Here we come. Only...

HE MUST have driven to the curb and stopped without remembering, because he heard Victoria rousing Hank. Faint excitement tingled in him, then dulled away. He could stay in the ambulance and lie down on the stretcher. Sleep. They didn't need him...

"Hey, wake up, will you? Wake up! Vicky, he's passed out on us."

No, I haven't, he wanted to say. *I'm just resting a moment. Just a moment.* Then he felt her lips on his face, her hands helping him out of the white jacket. "Just resting," he repeated.

"What's cooking now?"

asked Hank sleepily. "More meetings?"

"A meeting of minds—we hope," said Yester.

Cyrus sucked the cool air in. How many times could he revive, respond to a new stimulus, before he finally collapsed? Right now he was sleep-walking, no more. And Victoria...

"Well, here's where we take the lion by the horns—unicorn by the horn, I mean. No lights—we'll be a pleasant surprise."

"I wonder," said Victoria. "And are you sure this is the right place?"

"Pretty sure. We'll soon find out."

Nice if it isn't, thought Cyrus. Suppose it's the home of some Ama bigshot. One look at us and he'll know what we are and holler for the cutes. Nor was Stuart Yester preparing a more welcome reception by first pressing the doorbell with the heaviest of thumbs and then banging away at the wood.

XI

THE DOOR opened so violently that the chain across the six inches of space vibrated tautly. "What

the devil do you mean by such a damnable racket, ay? There's no call to bang a man's door apart in the middle of the night. Who are you anyway? Some blasted orderly or Medical Policeman on some nasty bit of business? Be off with you!"

The light behind him showed only tallness and bulk topped by an irregular shadow of uncombed hair. Cyrus got the impression that the chain was left on not for protection but to restrain the consul himself.

"Mr. Collitt?" Yester asked. "Mr. Wilfred Collitt?"

"Who the devil did you expect to find answering my front door—what's left of it—Dr. Crippen? I'm His Majesty's consul—diplomatic immunity and so on. You can safely assume my name's Collitt. I don't see what consequence my given name's to you."

"I meant no offence."

"Didn't you? No gentlemen is ever rude unintentionally. Now then..."

"We need your help," said Victoria simply.

"Ay? What's that? A woman? Help? What help?"

"May we come in and ex-

plain? I'm afraid we're a little conspicuous out here."

"You're speaking for them ay? No American man can state his business if there's a woman around to do it for him. Secretaries, nurses, mothers. No masculine responsibility in this country. How many are there of you? Can't see a thing out there."

"Myself, three men, and a child. We won't take much of your time..."

"You will take none of it tonight, Madam. If you've business with me, my office is open from nine to six. The English conduct business during office hours only, a practice which avoids the nervous conditions which Americans suffer from constantly."

"This lady is appealing for your protection," said Cyrus. "Surely courtesy..."

"**I** DON'T KNOW who you are to teach me manners," said the consul furiously. "Who are you, Sir? I say, who are you, ay?"

"My name will mean nothing to you. However it's Cyrus Tarn."

"Damned silly name, if you

ask me. British subject?"

"Ay?"

"I asked, 'Are you a British subject?' Simple question."

"No, I..."

"And the lady?"

"No I'm not, Mr. Collitt, but..."

"We're fellow members of the human race," said John Rald. "children of God, seeking your help because all men are brothers regardless of who presumes to rule them."

The consul made a gargling noise in his throat. "'God', by God. By God! Wake a man in the middle of the night, take his time, to tell him he has the fortune to share the world with you. Be off with you."

"We're appealing to the English sense of fair play," urged Yester. "Surely you won't turn us away without a hearing?"

"Come to my office. I'll hear you through. Goodnight, Sir. And take your foot out of my door before I-nip it off."

"Come on, Victoria. I was afraid it was-a faint hope..."

"Ay? What's that?"

"I was explaining to the lady..."

"Do you take me for a fool? I didn't think you were address-

ing a horse. What did you call her? Ay?"

"My name is Victoria Carling."

"Is it now? Is it indeed? Victoria, ay? I mean, it really is your name, not just something you picked up?"

"My father was a minister of the Gospel, and I've every reason to believe I was properly Christened."

"WELL, WELL," muttered the consul resentfully. "I suppose it would have to be. Anything to keep a man from his bed. Even over-rated and unpredictable English sentimentality. Drop a tear for the nobs who have to do their own charing. Suppose my mother's name had been Alexandra instead? Well, come in. What are you waiting out there for? And I suppose these—these fellows may as well come in also." He unhooked the chain, held the door wide, closed and bolted it behind them.

"Why are people always locking us in or out?" wondered Hank. "You'd think we were dangerous characters or something."

Mr. Collitt whirled around

and stared at Hank. "Boy, I try not to hold American children responsible for their manners, but it is difficult. Hold your tongue."

"The boy meant no harm, brother," said John Rald mildly.

"I'm no brother of yours, Sir. Not even with a bend sinister. My father was a miner. He couldn't afford by-blows."

"Glad to hear it. Blessed are the poor."

"All the training I went through overcoming my background, and then to be banished here. You'd think they might have had the decency to send me to Bhutan or Antarctica." He led them through the doorway. A fluorescent bulb nervously flickered alight.

"What a pleasant room," exclaimed Victoria.

"Good enough. I sit here and read when I can't sleep." He went to a large desk and sat down, looking fretful. "And I certainly won't be able to now. Not for hours unless I take one of those abominable tablets. I detest being doped or drugged."

"VERY SENSIBLE," remarked Rald. "I never

take stimulants or soporifics myself."

"You would if you were plagued by insomnia. Well, well. Victoria, ay? All right, I'll give you five minutes. What do you want?"

"Asylum," Victoria said quietly.

"Asylum? You're political refugees?"

"You could put it that way. We're what are known as mal-lies."

"Lunatics," said Collitt. "You were right, boy. I needn't have locked the door—the dangerous characters were inside already."

"Brother, a lunatic is someone who sees things differently from the man who calls him so. Can you be sure you wouldn't be a mallie yourself if you were an American?"

"I wouldn't think of being an American."

"We're sane," said Cyrus wearily, "by any medical standards prevailing in free countries. The Ama calls us maladjusted because we are no more docile than the English were in 1215 or 1688. Or ever, for that matter."

"But asylum... Unthink-

able. Stretch the term political all you like, and it still won't cover the situation. You don't like doctors. Between us, I'm not too fond of them myself. Tried to make me stop reading at night. I was a scholarship boy. Had to study all night to catch up with the public school boys. Habit now—and insomnia. Doctors—take a pill! But they're your royalty, not ours. Prefer the House of Windsor myself—it's easier to control well-trained, genteel persons than a whole profession bent on cutting you up or making you do things for your own good. Very well, we are agreed on not liking doctors. Good-night."

"This is a matter of life and death," said Yester.

"**H**OW? DON'T fancy inoculations? Or something of the sort? None of our business. You aren't British, you're obviously Americans—yet four adults and a child have the temerity to call it life and death because you don't like being physicked or psycho-analyzed."

"It's much more than that," said Yester. "And we're not

all asking for help. Only three of us—including Victoria and the boy."

"Why not all of you? And your families and friends? Why be so modest when you ask me to violate international law?"

"We have no families," said Victoria. "And our friends are staying to fight the medarchy."

"You shouldn't tell me such things," said the consul fretfully. He crossed the room to a buffet and returned with a bottle. His robe flabbed open, revealing thin white legs.

"Say," whispered Hank, "he hasn't got pajamas. Or else they shrank."

"Henry!"

Collitt filled his glass deliberately, held it up to the light, sipped. "Nightshirt," he said. "Flannel. There were no pajamas for coalminers' children. Soon as wear a straightjacket, anyway. So you want to go to England, boy?"

"I don't care. I want to go where Vicky goes. And Si."

"You wouldn't like it. You wouldn't like it at all. Cheek your elders there, my lad, or your headmaster, and you'll get the slipper or the cane be-

fore you can say John Dewey. And with American schooling you'd never pass the Eleven-plus examinations. No firsts at Oxford for you."

"I'm not scared," Hank muttered.

"Good. You're not quiet either. You will not speak in this house again unless I speak to you."

"Why not?" Hank was interested.

"Henry, do what Mr. Collitt says. I mean that."

CYRUS JERKED almost completely awake. He tried to take advantage of the momentary silence to say quickly, "We don't want to impose too greatly. If you could just help us get on board one of the English ships in port..."

"By heavens" said the consul. "By heavens!" He poured himself another drink, his hand shaking a trifle. "And that's what you call not imposing too greatly? Risk my job, my reputation, my years of trying to better myself, my mother's sacrifices. And that's all—all—you want."

"You wouldn't be the first Englishman to help people

fighting for their liberty. Byron..."

"You're not fighting, you're running. And damn Byron—lords can afford grand gestures that are just too expensive for common men. Back in 1958 an attache in Prague was soft enough to hide a Czech in the boot of his car. The fellow banged loudly on the bootlid at the border where newspaper photographers were waiting. Naturally the attache was fired by the F. O."

"We're not agents provocateur," Victoria said with weary coldness. "Do you imagine we'd use a child?"

"It's been known. But even if you could prove your good faith, I couldn't interfere in your country's affairs."

"Not even to save lives?"

"Whose life is in danger?"

"My unborn child's," said Victoria.

Rald and Yester looked at her. The consul lifted his glass, put it down. "Ah. Unauthorized pregnancy?"

VICTORIA nodded slowly. Cyrus thought she had never looked so regal. "We have money for our passage,"

he put in, realizing immediately that he had said the wrong thing.

Collitt gave him a scathing stare and turned back to Victoria. "Where's your husband?"

She touched Cyrus' arm. "We'll be married as soon as we get to England. Or maybe the captain..."

The stare had been benevolent compared to the one Cyrus got now. "So that's the sort you are? Take advantage of young girls, ay? You monster!"

"Don't you dare call Cyrus a monster," cried Victoria.

"Ay? But the fellow sedu— Well, I like spirit in a girl. Three of my own—no boys. Sit down, my dear. Do you feel all right?"

"Yes. I mean, I think so. A little dizzy..."

"Have some brandy. Good thing for the nerves. Even helps insomnia sometimes."

"Thank you. I'm sorry I snapped at you."

"Quite all right. I daresay you don't find him a monster. Still... Well, what's done is done." His look at Cyrus con-

tradicted his statement of resignation.

"Cyrus wants to marry me," she said. "Give him a chance."

"This isn't a matrimonial clearing house. Who put me in this unhappy position by naming you Victoria?"

"MY FATHER. He was a great admirer of that Queen. He was writing a history of the medarchy which the subcuties have got, but if we get to England I intend to rewrite and publish it."

"Freedom of speech, ay? Tell the truth and shame the devil? Publish and be damned, as Wellington said. Now look here. Suppose—just for argument's sake, you understand—suppose you get on a British ship and go to England. Well, then, your child will be born there. Can't get around that. And if he's born in England he'll be a subject of His Majesty the King. Can't help but be."

Unless we register him at an American consulate, thought Cyrus, keeping his mouth tightly shut.

"And if he's going to be a British subject—well, these

philosophical fellows say time is nonexistent—he's one right now for all practical purposes. What difference does a few months make? Yes, a British subject. As such it's my duty to aid him in every way. What?"

"Your reasoning's very logical," said Yester.

The consul glared at him. "Gilbert, sir. The great and only W. S. Gilbert. Not *my* reasoning. Now where were we? Oh yes. Duty to aid a presumptive British subject. Can't very well help him without helping you, my dear, ay?"

"Thank you. I was sure you would help us. Oh, thank you."

"No, no. I'm supposed to aid a British subject. And his mother. It's plain duty. Besides there's precedent. I recall the case of four Hungarians who would have been deported if one of the women hadn't been pregnant. The Home Office made an exception for her. Since we couldn't think of separating a family, we had to make an exception for her husband too. And then it would hardly be right to deport the other two just because they weren't expecting a baby. English justice. Now, let me see...

"Your sense of timing's convenient—almost suspicious. There's a ship in whose captain would give anything but his beard to cock a snook at the medarchy. Black beard, full and bushy—drives the orderlies and MPs mad. They tried to keep him from coming ashore. I had to protest. The whole crew—except one lad who couldn't—grew sympathetic beards. I could take you down to the docks in the consular car. I have the pestilential orderlies in hand enough so won't ask anyone with me for their charts."

VICTORIA was having some difficulty in speaking. "Oh... Mr. Collitt..."

"Silliest thing I've ever done. Reversion to childhood sentimentality, no doubt. Most inconvenient time and place I ever heard of to get fatherly."

"Oh, Mr. Collitt, please... You've been so unbelievably kind to me. But... Oh Mr. Collitt, I can't go without Hank and Cyrus."

The consul's face hardened. He took up his brandy again. "The boy, Henry—don't tell me your reverend father also

admired Harry the Eighth."

"No. I won't tell you anything but that I've taken care of him since he was born, and if the subcuties got hold of him they would do everything to make him talk. He knows too much, you see."

"I see, but it's none of my business, none of the Crown's business. If you people don't like the medarchy, why don't you get rid of it? You booted out George III fast enough when it suited you. If you hadn't been in such a beastly hurry, you might never had the Ama on your necks."

"You wouldn't expect me to leave a child to face..."

"Not the point, my dear, not the point at all. It isn't the terrors of the medarchy that make the system so ghastly. Every regime has its seamy side. When you come right down to it, everything we've done hasn't been... well, everything it ought. But however we've gotten off the track, we've always stood basically for decency and individual rights. Hypocrisy, it's called by those who don't believe it's better to fall short of a high standard than conform to a low

one. The fundamental evil of the healthfare state is not the wretched things done out of an excess of zeal, but the existence and dominance of that kind of zeal in the first place—the zeal to impose a pattern on people for their own good. To lump individuals in groups, treat humans as though they were animals to be cared for, fattened, and eventually put out of their misery.”

AH, THOUGHT Cyrus, another congenital mallie, born in the wrong country. You can always tell us by our outstanding symptom: loquacity.

John Rald said, “Brother, you’re right. No man should have the dreadful pride to play God. or to rule another.”

“That’s nonsense, absolute nonsense. However I’ve no intention of getting into an argument with *you*. Question now is the status of the boy. Family ties—precedent, you remember. Uncle of a British subject. It’s stretching things but we’ll take him along. That settles everything, ay?”

“You haven’t said anything about Cyrus.”

“Victoria, I’ll join you later.

Don’t worry about me. I’ll get a chart and the other papers and try for the next ship. Everything will be all right.”

“Will it? Will it indeed? By heaven, I knew you were what you are the first time I laid eyes on you. You have a shifty look. First you lead this poor girl astray—then, when you’ve had your will of her, you’re ready to desert her and sneak off. Next boat indeed! I know your kind—probably got your eye on some other innocent already. Well, this time it won’t wash—you’ll go with her and the captain shall marry you if I have to tie you up myself.”

“Oh thank you, Mr. Collitt. Thank you, thank you.”

“Nonsense. Man’s a monster—always said so. I’ll see he marries you, my dear—after that, he can cast himself overboard, and good riddance. If I’m sending His Majesty a new subject, the least I can do is to see that he’s legitimate. By the by—when you get Home...”

“I know,” said Hank. “She’ll have to go to a doctor.”

“A good doctor,” amended Cyrus.

“A very good doctor,” agreed Victoria.

Utility Girl

(continued from page 41)

tain. If I hadn't read somewhere about only Terran ships retaining that stupid section of the contract, I might have left ship in the asteroids. But I knew that you were chartered under Aantarian registry."

"You acted as though you believed me," I accused.

Theo laughed at my scowl. "Naturally," she said. "I wanted to know how far you might carry the bluff before I spoke."

"Women," I groaned weakly, and grinned. "What about Blaiter? Why did you lead him to believe such a thing?"

"Believe it or not," she said, "but I was cured the moment I saw him again. How else

could I have driven him away so completely?"

I shook my head, admiring the dimple that came and went with her smile. How could I ever have thought her plain? Or perhaps it was something about space, and self confidence, and acquired poise that made her so attractive.

Blaiter came dashing in with the two thousand credits, tossed them at Theo, and vanished. The intercom came to life. It was approaching time for blast-off with Sebal at the end of this hop. We headed for the control room together.

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THE LAST WORD



The Reckoning

NEARLY everyone put part one of the serial in first place; after that there was close contention between the two short stories and the two short-short stories. Here is how your votes finally placed them.

1. Caduceus Wild part one (Moore & Bradford)	1.37
2. The Cyclops Gun (Siegel)	2.22
3. The Anaheim Disease (St. Clair)	2.44
4. Make A Prison (Block)	4.00
5. Perfect Marriage (G. H. Smith)	4.33

The re-vote on the question of serials still shows a definite majority in favor, but the breakdown also shows that you prefer 2-part serials, though you'll tolerate 3-installment novels. Only a minority were in favor of 4-part continued stories.

I sympathize entirely; four installments do stretch a novel out longer than is entirely comfortable. But the practice is more often than not a necessity, if we are to have really long novels. However — *you* have the last word, and you have spoken. Thus, when we're able to resume monthly publication, and offer more novels, we shall restrict them to such lengths as can conveniently be cut up into no more than three parts.

We apologize humbly for the extra-month wait between parts three and four of "Caduceus Wild", which was certainly not intended by either the editor or publisher of this magazine, but was forced upon us by circumstances beyond our control. Oldtimers, however, may recall an even rougher break: In May 1932, the June issue of *Astounding Stories* carried part one of a 4-part serial by Charles Willard Diffin, "Two Thousand Miles Below". Came the first Thursday of June, and no new issue of the magazine appeared; nor was there an August issue in July. In August, the September issue appeared, bearing part two with the reluctant announcement that circumstances had forced the shift to publication every other month. It was November, with the January 1933 issue, before readers were able to finish the story.

Only once has a science fiction magazine completely discontinued publication with a serial unfinished. Anyone recall when that was, and what the story was?

Dear RAWL:

Votes on the Jan. 59 SFS: *First*, "*Caduceus Wild*", because it appears to be coming up with concepts "in depth" rather than first stating the ideas and then settling down to three installments of Hacktion (always room for revision of this rating, if it goofs out). Those reworked hymns are outrageously funny until it's realized that the attitudes portrayed aren't as far out from the present norm as you might think, at first.

The shorts are weak, this time. *Second*, "*The Anaheim Disease*", in spite of the tacked on atomic dirge (not integral to the tale), but because it combines more ideas, better, than any of the rest. *Third*, "*Cyclops Gun*", because it poses a problem and comes up with a legitimate solution, regardless of the disproportionate importance given One Small Area, and all. *Fourth*, "*Perfect Marriage*": a pretty weak kicker on this one, and out of the hat, at that. *Fifth and last*, "*Make a Prison*"—this one suffers even more so than the preceding item—here, the windup is only possible because of a com-

plete vacuum in the realm of relevant background. Actually, #4 is just as poor, plotwise, but possibly gains from "human interest" of the gossipy variety.

If all the contents were being rated, I'd place "Futuristic Detective" in the #2 spot.

With Bob Madle holding down the only existing gate between Casual Reader and Joe Phan, I wish he would quit wasting space on horror movies and concentrate on Cons and fanzines. (I realize there's a huge time-lag on the appearance of his columns, which tends to influence the material, but phoo on horror movies, anyhow.)

Lettercol: Tim Dumont appears to be a Good Head (but I'm not joining an anti-Alma movement; I enjoy Miz Hill's letters). VEPaul will likely be much less cautious and studied in his opinions after attending the next WorldCon: the D*E*-T*E*N*T*I*O*N, to be held in his own home town of Detroit. Willis Freeman must be a CRY subscriber: his quote re "Femmequin 973" is from the Pemberton column. There is nothing like anonymous ego-

boo, I tell you. Absolutely nothing. Freeman's ratings are a Public Service.

Designed to fill the looong gap between 1955 and the next time that TAFF-schedules will bring an overseas fan to a mid-west or eastcoast WorldConvention, the "John Berry to Detroit" Fund is dedicated to bringing that fabulous and prolific fan-writer to the Detention next September. Fund sponsors include (currently—we haven't heard from everybody as yet) Dick Ellington, Nick & Noreen Falasca, Bob Pavlat, F.M. & Elinor Busby, Boyd Raeburn, Steve Schultheis, and the entire Detroit WorldCon Committee, with Bill Rickhardt (21175 Goldsmith Ave, Farmington, Michigan) serving as Fund HQ. The

Detroit Mob are furnishing John's hotel accommodations at the Con; this is a Good Deal from those good people. And the Berry Fund has a new feature: in case the Fund should be unable to achieve its objective *for any reason*, all contributions of \$2.00 or more will be returned to the donor (the remainder would be turned over to TAFF). So, keeping in mind the long and honorable record of the GDA in keeping fandom on the straight and narrow path, our motto: "Detention for the Goon."

—F. M. BUSBY,
2852 14th Ave. W.,
Seattle 99, Washington

Space limitations being what they are, we've been unable to get Madle's department in as often as we should like to do. ... Reactions to "Make A Prison" were mostly extreme, readers either finding it delightful, as your editor did—so obvious that the ending came as a complete surprise—or just plain weak.

SPEAKING OF NAMES

Dear RAWL:

The reader who objected to

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T O D A Y !

the name "Mjipa" in Sprague de Camp's "Tower of Zanid" as unbelievable, or unscientific, or whatever, would doubtless find the same fault with such names as "Aama", "Gnanapragasam", "Gnwamusse", "Gnokoro", "Gxoyiya", "Onyemelukwe", "Xaba", "Xego", "Xulu", "Zakariasy", and "Zungu". Outlandish, aren't they? Right out of an unscientific author's fantastic pipe dreams, with which no intelligent person will be deceived, and up with which our Mr. Paul would not put?

Nope—nothing of the kind. You'll find them all in the 1957-58 edition of "*Crockford's Clerical Directory*", which is a "Reference Book of the Clergy of the Church of England and of Other Churches in Communion with the See of Canterbury". So again we see fiction as milder than fact—much milder!

MURRAY KING,
Greenwich, Conn.

Of course, there is one flaw in the defense that "truth is stranger than fiction", when seeming impossibilities come

up in stories. Truth conforms to various levels of order, the higher ones often being beyond our comprehension, while fiction, being man-made, ought to be under control; and since there must be some sort of intelligible communication between author and reader, fiction must conform to order which is more or less commonly comprehensible.

This does not mean that everything in fiction ought to be easy to understand, but rather that important points and allusions, motivations, etc., need to be in the public's frame of reference, or the generally available frame of reference. Otherwise, an author ought to explain if a particular point or allusion, etc., is necessary to his purposes. "Caduceus Wild", for example, is loaded with allusions which may not be in a particular reader's frame of reference, but are nonetheless in the generally-available frame. However, the storyline is by no means lost if a reader misses the point of an allusion; and the vital ones are spelled out.

What Mr. Paul objects to, I think, is what he took for pseudo-reference: terms and allusions which are handled as if they were in the general frame, but which actually can be referred only to the au-

thor's own imagination, or to a few of his select friends who may be in on the meaning.

VIVE LE SAFQ!

Dear RAWL:

Today came my copy of OSF and for once your editorial was off my beat. I never care for whodunnits—have no wish to lay villains by the heels, so the puzzles leave me cold. You take one of de Camp's heroes, and one of anybody else's villains, and

they would understand each other just fine; and it may be that here is a clue to why some people don't seem to appreciate science fiction. They know darned good and well that some sneaking realism is in there somewhere, and that's probably where—right in the gosh darned philosophy, of all the fool places to be realistic.

The letter that irked me was not Tim Dumont's, but the one with the scandalous proposal that deCamp should not be allowed to make up any more words. Oh! No! Please! Those deCamp imaginary

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BALL CLINIC, DEPT. 62, EXCELSIOR SPRINGS, MO.

planets are to me blissful, and I agree with you that Mjipa is artistic both as to characterization and as to label. I did regret Spraguè's carrying philosophical realism so far as to leave the hero drunk in a gutter, where he naturally would be according to character and purposes. Even life is more lenient than that with many such. A story like that should have a good gafia finale, like the Conan stories, and leave the hero's future to the charity of the reader's imagination. What became of the valiant who added the gunsight to the crossbow and upset the planetary geopolitics? Who cares; let us extrapolate for him a long life and a merry one, until death, the terminator of delights and separator of compan-

ions, etcetera. So with Fallon; he'd have made a dashed good Dash t. One must admit the logic of the outcome, if the author is bound to have it so. But at least let Krishna remain Krishna, logical and therefore absurd! Vive le Saq! It is only a skip, hop and parsec from modern Iraq, so what's so hard about it? Let us not swallow intergalactic travel and then strain at a cute little gnat like that! As for Vernon Paul, if he wants words of one syllable which he can pronounce, then purf slome nish fid tush to him. So there now. Before I forget I'm a lady and tell him some three-letter words.

—ALMA HILL,
Lee Academy,
Lee, Maine
[Turn Page]

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"INSIDE EMSH"
by GRAETZ

RAWL:

The January SFS, prompts me to write again. Most noticeable: a couple of old hands back at the board. Here's Virgil Finlay on page 7 to start off a rather good serial, and lo, on page 75 do I detect the hand of L. Sterne Stevens? Or have I got him mixed up with Napoli again? Anyway, it's one of the two. I'll be expecting Marchioni and As-tarita next month, Mr. Lowndes!

To get the rest of the issue out of the way, here's the reckoning:

1. Caduceus Wild—Moore and Bradford. Gonna overturn the old status quo again, I see. So far, a good job, with the usual Not-Quite-Too-Old Narrator-

Hero, the Engaging Old Character, and the Well-to-do. In (Dr. Tree) who may be an Out; in short, all the trappings of a good Revolution Novel.

2. The Anaheim Disease—St. Clair. Mostly because she writes better than any of the rest.

3. The Cyclops Gun—Siegel. Nice Problem, predictable solution.

4. Perfect Marriage—GHSmith. At least there was *some* plot

5. Make a Prison—Block. I just do not like the do-nothing parable.

I'm tempted to give those last two "X"s, but I really want to give #4 the X. and that would be silly.

Did I like the cover? It's a cover by Emsh. Covers by Emsh that adorn
[Turn Page]

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OrigSF, *Future*, or *Infinity* serve only to identify a new issue. His best work seems restricted to other publications. In one respect, Ed Emsh has become the Bergey of the Middle-class Sf books. In much the same way, you and Larry Shaw have taken the mantle of Merwin and Mines. Naturally, the work all around is much better, but the place filled by your magazines is relatively the same. They're the body of what once was called stf; always readable, oftentimes good, occasionally great.

Speaking of the latter, what happened to reader comment on the outstanding Novelet of the year, "The Sound of the Wind"? I had expected to see at least one full edition of *The Last*

[Turn To Page 128]

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That story coming up by Carl Knox—don't you mean Cal, as in Calbob Silverknox, the prolific writer of words and sentences?

To the wars (something I used to say when I was a letterhack for the lamented pulps referred to above).

Tim Dumont: You rightly defend Emsh, but for some wrong reasons. Ed is very likely the busiest sf illustrator today. As with most professionals, the bulk of his work is of necessity routine. This does not imply that it is bad; on the contrary, for such an output it is surprisingly good. Back awhile, there was a man who drew covers with even more frequency than Emsh; it is probably safe to ascribe 95% of the postwar covers of the now-dead Thrilling Publications to the late Earle Bergey. Most of these are outstandingly bad. It is ironic that in his last year, Bergey began to show his real talent, and many of his 1952 covers are really fine.

Ed Emsh doesn't turn out quite the rash of covers, but he does a good pile of interior

illustration, something Bergey never did. None of it is bad. Most of it is routine, consequently many of the habits of the continuity cartoonist show up, including this elusive "Emsh Effect". (I'm damned if I know just what Alma Hill means by that. It sure isn't on the cover of the January issue.) Ed's anatomical work is unexceptionable; if anything, it is boringly accurate. A few exaggerations might liven things up. But for some real physiological whoppers, I again refer you to the Bergey Age, 1946-50. The Bergey Girl,

Tim, (and Alma too, if you're still listening) is a legend of sfdom.

As for the influence of Edd Cartier, what could be better? I think Kelly Freas shows more of this influence, however, and has made more of it in his work. I think Freas counts more as the heir of Cartier, while Ed Emsh is the heir of Rogers and Bergey.

You know, sf has never been without a dominant figure in illustration. Right now it's Emsh, and before him, Bergey. There was Timmins, and before him, Rogers. Way, way

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back there was Howard V. Browne and someone called Frank R. Paul, the spiritual father of every sf artist.

Alma, in the case of art, science-fiction never had it so good. If you think Ed Emsh is bad, then look back into the war years, and before and just after. Tim, if you intend to break into the field, you might peer at some of those musty volumes for the historical background, if nothing else. There's some real crud.

OK, RAWL, I'm through.
—J. MARTIN GRAETSZ,
32 Fayette St.,
Cambridge 39, Mass.

Shucks, Martin, you've overlooked several well-known, and oft-praised artists between the times of Frank R. Paul and Edd Cartier. H. W. Wesso, Leo Morey, Eliott Dold, and Charles Schneeman were all giants in their day—and one of these, Leo Morey, has returned to science fiction illustration recently. RAWL.

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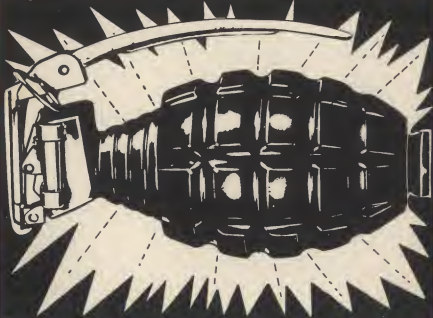
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